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Paganism in England 1885-1914

Jennifer Rachel Hallett

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements
of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts.
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines paganism in England from the late Victorian period to the outbreak of the First World War. It explores paganism as an aspect of cultural history and defines paganism as the use of images and ideas from the ancient, pre-Christian, Mediterranean world. It identifies the existence of a radical desire for paganism to be restored in the modern era and it asserts that although this desire cannot be separated into discrete groups or movements, it did manifest itself in different varieties. This thesis reveals that there were three different varieties of paganism in operation during our period; these are labelled 'responsible' paganism, 'decadent' paganism, and 'magical' paganism. The form and nature of these varieties of paganism are discussed, analysed, and placed in the context of the wider cultural situation. This thesis concludes that paganism was used in an attempt to satisfy both spiritual and human aspirations.

DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks, first and foremost, goes to Professor Ronald Hutton. Without his unwavering counsel and guidance, not to mention the inspiration gained from his certain genius, this thesis would surely never have come to fruition. I must also thank the many libraries and librarians whose assistance has aided me in the course of this research; most notably, Bristol University's Arts and Social Sciences Library, the British Library, Bristol City Library, the Bodleian Library at Oxford University, the University of London Library, Sheffield City Library Archives, the Library of the Warburg Institute, and Kings College Cambridge Archive Centre. Pushing fear of overindulgence aside, I would additionally like to pay tribute to a few others: to Joan Morris for stimulating my interest in all things religious; to my late grandparents whose financial generosity set this project in motion; to Dad, Mum and Tim for their unprecedented levels of familial love and support; and finally to my dearest Robin, for living this with me.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original, except where indicated by special reference in the text, and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other academic award. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED:.....*Mallett*..... DATE: *January 2007*

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INTRODUCTION

I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn, -
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn...
William Wordsworth, 'The World Is Too Much With Us' (1807)

When Wordsworth penned these words in 1807, he surely could not have imagined the rise of paganism that was to occur over the next two centuries. And yet, in work such as his, one of the key tones of paganism was set and one of the key attractions of paganism delineated. The Romantic feeling of loss, dissatisfaction, and nostalgia for the joys of earlier bygone ages continued throughout the century. The closing decades of the nineteenth and opening decades of the twentieth centuries, was the time when calls for a return to paganism first reached their apex in the modern era. Many radicals increasingly called for paganism in earnest, imagined paganism as the embodiment of delight, and looked to paganism as a source of alternative wisdom. However, at the same time, Wordsworth was right: ancient paganism was a 'creed outworn'. Those attracted to paganism did not call for the restoration of ancient paganism wholesale. Instead, a modern paganism emerged; the product of negotiation and creative application of modern and ancient thought. This resulted in versions of paganism specifically designed to cater for the needs and desires of the radical men and women who imagined them. Thus paganism during this period was, fundamentally, a product of its age.

Before we consider this further, let us first set out our parameters. The word 'paganism' is difficult to define. It derives from the Latin *paganus*, largely believed to denote 'rustic', but its original application is widely debated by historians.¹ Nevertheless, the concern of this thesis lies not with its origins but its uses and application during the period 1885-1914. In understanding this, we must recognise the non-uniform and multi-various ways in which the word was applied. This bears the further significance that this propensity has continued into the modern day. Michael York, who has attempted to define paganism in light of ancient and modern faiths, begins his examination with the

¹ Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 4. Here Hutton highlights the work of two academics: Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians in the Mediterranean World from the Second Century to the Conversion of Constantine* (London: Viking, 1986), 30-1; Pierre Chauvin, *A Chronicle of the Last Pagans* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990), 7-9.

perception that 'paganism is a religious orientation whose historical trajectory has produced an overall misunderstanding which survives into present times. In fact, there appears to be little mutual understanding concerning what paganism is'.² This is important for the historian presenting his or her work in the twenty-first century, because there is the potential for misinterpretation and preconceived bias.

This thesis hopes to overcome such confusion by a clear defining of terms. It takes paganism to mean the positive use of images and ideas from the pre-Christian Mediterranean world, most notably those from ancient Greece, Rome and Egypt. Historians are in agreement that the Victorians had a love affair with the ancient Mediterranean world. What is significant is that in their handling of the ancient world they used a largely unhistorical methodology, seldom letting the ancients speak for themselves, and instead dealing in a plethora of stereotypes, ideals, and country-specific images. The historiography of Victorian attitudes towards the ancient world benefits from several excellent academic works. Richard Jenkyns and Frank M. Turner stand out as the foremost contributors to the Victorian handling of ancient Greece with, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* and *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, respectively.³ Published within a year of each other, neither author had the benefit of the other's assessment, the result of which is two highly different books. Jenkyns deals primarily with literature and visual arts;⁴ Turner assesses the application of Greek political, religious and mythological ideas. A full length academic text on *The Victorians and Ancient Rome*, has been afforded by Norman Vance.⁵ In addition, Catherine Edwards has edited a collection of papers on the reception of Rome in modern history.⁶ A full length examination has not yet been devoted to the Victorians and ancient Egypt. Here, we remain indebted to the work of archaeologists, ancient historians and art and architectural historians. One particularly notable eight volume series has recently been published by

² Michael York, 'Defining Paganism' in *The Pomegranate*, 11 (Winter, 2000), 4-9, 4.

³ Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980); Frank M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981). Their findings have been summed up and discussed in Peter Green, *Classical Bearings: Interpreting Ancient History and Culture* (California: University of California Press, 1998), Chapter 2 'Victorian Hellas', 31-44.

⁴ Jenkyns contributed further to his analysis with the publication of *Dignity and Decadence* (London: Harper Collins, 1991).

⁵ Norman Vance, *The Victorians and Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

⁶ Catharine Edwards, ed. *Roman Presences: Receptions of Rome in European Culture, 1789-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

the UCL press entitled *Encounters with Ancient Egypt*.⁷ The contribution of these academics is highly valuable, but examination is usually dealt with in terms of the entire history of the legacy of Egypt and so examination of the Victorian period in specific detail is missing.

It is clear from the findings of the scholarly work in existence that, for the vast majority, the ancient Mediterranean world was used to justify modern society and exemplify its best aspects, while for others it was used as an alternative to modern society. What these scholars discuss in little detail is that, for the most radical, the ancient world came to promise joy and wisdom exceeding that of any experienced in Christendom, and was looked to as an alternative to the Christian faith. No historical work has been devoted to this area of study hitherto and it is on these radical and counter-cultural sentiments that this thesis focuses. It should be initially stressed that there were no actual fully-fledged pagans or any cohesive fully-formed sets of ideas during our period of study. Rather, this thesis examines emerging thoughts and ideas, always counter-cultural, but varying in extremes and emphasis. Ronald Hutton, in his pioneering work, *The Triumph of the Moon*, asserts that there were four ‘languages’ of paganism operating in society during the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries: in the Old Testament sense as aspects of savagery and ignorance; in terms of the Victorian reverence for Hellenistic and Roman art, literature and philosophy; as part of an idea of a world religion, with all major religions reflecting aspects of the same divine revelation; and as the admiration of paganism without restraint, characterising paganism as ‘joyous, liberationist, and life-affirming traditions, profoundly and valuably connect with both the natural world and with human spirit creativity’. The latter two languages both see paganism as something positive in itself, while the fourth language, Hutton asserts, over time became *the* language of twentieth century paganism.⁸ This thesis is overwhelmingly indebted to Hutton and it is within this more general reflection made by Hutton that the work of this thesis should be placed. The current research examines the positive affirmation of paganism in the decades surrounding the turn of the century in far greater

⁷ *Encounters with Ancient Egypt*, 8 book series (London: University College London Press, 2003).

⁸ Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, 3-31, 20.

depth than the nature of Hutton's entire history of modern paganism, from 1800 to the present, allowed for.

This thesis explores the different images of paganism in circulation, the ways in which an attraction to paganism was manifest, and what those attracted to paganism were getting out of using it. The most important themes within this enquiry centre round the place of religion, man, and nature. This thesis questions the extent to which paganism was experienced as a religion, asking in particular, what the relationship was between paganism and Christianity; what type of religion those who esteemed paganism longed for; and how paganism was linked to a rise of interest in mystery religions and the irrational state of man. It highlights the importance paganism afforded to the place of man, and questions how such concepts interacted with religious and secular ideas; why concern with the place of man was so prominent during this period; and what the links of such ideas were to wider concepts of the metaphysical and the triumph of idealism at the turn of the century. In examining the role of nature, this thesis examines the character of man's interaction with the natural world, and asks why men and women increasingly fell in love with the natural world; what was the role of nature in man's realisation of his divinity; why was the natural world feminised; and how was nature important in presentation of paganism as the antithesis of the modern world? Pivotal to all three of these themes, are perceptions of the modern world. As we shall see, these images shifted, often uneasily and contradictorily, between the Victorian and Edwardian age as old, tired, and creaking under the heavy weight of the centuries it has endured, and as an exciting young world, pregnant with possibility and brimming with new ideas.

The examination and analysis of this thesis is important for historians and scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As should be clear, this thesis falls within the category of cultural history. Peter Burke has asserted that one aspect of the current revival of cultural history is 'as a reaction against earlier approaches to the past which left out something at once elusive and important...the cultural historian gets to parts of the past that other historians cannot reach'.⁹ This perception is important in the context of a history of paganism, both in the wider sense of the benefits of a cultural approach, and in the specific sense of paganism as a strand of Victorian and Edwardian

⁹ Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 1.

culture, until now, severely overlooked. Indeed, this study of paganism adds a new dimension to nineteenth and early twentieth century cultural history. By recognising and analysing the attraction of paganism, valuable insight can be gained into the fears and aspirations of the few, and an increasingly pluralistic concept of the cultural climate of the many can be facilitated. The current thesis is a contribution to religious history, unveiling as it does one of the paths undertaken by those who had either partially or totally lost faith in Christianity, as well as delineating some of the requirements many asked of religion. It also contributes to an understanding of the more secular aspects of the period, such as social morality, the reaction against industrialism, and the search for alternative ways of living; however, offering a further important contribution, this thesis contends that these aspects cannot be properly considered in this context divorced from spiritual content. In addition, the consideration within this thesis of the magical aspects in paganism, contributes to an understanding of the way in which ritual magic was linked to the wider society in which it operated. Furthermore, this thesis benefits from an interdisciplinary approach, combining historical with literary analysis, and enabling added penetration into the cultural atmosphere of the time.

Although paganism did not take the form of a cohesive movement or set of movements, for the purpose of this thesis paganism has been divided into three varieties, which form three central chapters of the thesis - 'responsible' paganism, 'decadent' paganism, and 'magical' paganism. These three strands were identified in the course of the research. They were not applied as such during the period in question; however, a chapter in G.K. Chesterton's *Heretics* points towards an awareness of differentiation between the uses of paganism.¹⁰ Chesterton's chapter is a reply to an article by Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson which advocated the merits of paganism; as a Catholic, Chesterton did not agree with Lowes Dickinson's argument. Nevertheless, Chesterton asserts that the paganism of Lowes Dickinson is at least worthy of debate, whereas the paganism of Charles Algernon Swinburne and Walter Pater is flowery, frivolous and, ultimately, useless. At once, this marks out two varieties of paganism in circulation. This thesis names these varieties 'responsible' and 'decadent'; however, it must be asserted that the present examination does not approach them from a position of bias or consider

¹⁰ G.K. Chesterton, 'Paganism and Mr. Lowes Dickinson', in *Heretics* (London: Bodley Head, 1905).

one variety more favourably than the other, as Chesterton did. The third variety of paganism identified in this thesis, 'magical' paganism, was largely hidden from wider society and so this aspect is usually excluded from accounts of the operation of paganism in society written during our period. Notwithstanding, this is an identifiable additional variety of paganism, and easily separable from the first two varieties, not least because of its distinctly esoteric nature. As is stressed throughout the thesis, the division of paganism into three varieties is in part a tool to facilitate manageable and meaningful examination; three different varieties did broadly exist but this is not to say such division is absolute, in terms of both the characteristics displayed and the individuals involved in each variety.

The above explanation of the identification and handling of the three varieties of paganism, brings us onto a consideration of methodological issues. Most theses conventionally begin with a review of secondary literature about the subject, followed by a review of methodology. In the case of this thesis, since there is no single body of secondary literature and methodological questions specifically related to the subject matter have yet to be raised, the thesis proposes to approach the subject in a different way. This is not to say that a consideration and sensitivity to methodology is absent from the examination and I should here like to raise four points relating to methodology. Firstly, there are issues of linguistics. This is pertinent to deciphering whether the employment of the word 'paganism' was, for example, a short-hand, roughly applied choice with little depth of meaning, or a carefully chosen word imbued with a specific and important image. Such consideration also extends to choices in phrases relating to deities: does to say 'the gods have not been kind to us' imply a polytheistic paganism or is it a stock phrase with little significance? In this case, one suspects validity in the latter, but in more complex cases this cannot always be discerned. An awareness of such issues is important, and I have pointed out particularly questionable cases as they arise throughout the thesis.

Closely linked to these concerns, arise the issues relating to the present examination as work of literary history. The term 'literary history' is a problematic one, and subject to manifold interpretation.¹¹ It is applied here to indicate the manner in which

¹¹ See Wendell V. Harris, *Literary Meaning: Reclaiming the Study of Literature* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1996), 157-78.

the thesis is a history that seeks to uncover the conditions which produced new themes in literature, in this case, paganism. As such, it adopts a historicist approach, drawing on works of literature as historical texts and firmly placing them in their historical context. The benefits and pitfalls of literary history as a theoretical perspective have been widely discussed and need not be repeated here in any length.¹² The current examination does include discussion on the role of literature in escapism and questions the existence within literature of internal philosophies. It addresses recent ideas about the use of reading to extend and redefine boundaries of the self.¹³ It also attempts to provide a balance between emphasis on the author and the audience. Regrettably, due to the availability of the sources, the voice of the author is usually the most dominant; further research into the reception of literature would be to the benefit of this thesis.¹⁴

Thirdly, are the problems that come with the study of religion. Some of these have already been briefly mentioned, but in order to firmly ground the position of this examination in the dialectics of methodology, it must be asserted that an empirical method has been adopted, by which is meant, it is impossible to answer religious questions and so it is not the business of the researcher to judge the validity of the believer's truth but rather to show that it is real to its adherents. Since this thesis does not examine a fully formed religion, it is not relevant to include a full discussion of issues relating to the study of religion, but an awareness of such approaches is to the benefit of the present research.¹⁵

¹² See David Perkins, ed. *Theoretical Issues in Literary History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991); Jeffrey N. Cox and Larry J. Reynolds, eds., *New Historical Literary Study: Essays on Reproducing Texts, Representing History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Jonathan Bate, 'The Climates of Literary History', in *The European English Messenger*, Vol. 7.2 (Autumn, 1998), 12-20; John R. Hall, 'Culture of inquiry and the rethinking of disciplines' in Patrick Joyce, ed. *The Social in Question: New Bearings in History and the Social Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2002), 191-210.

¹³ Lisa Brocklebank, 'Psychic Reading' in *Victorian Studies* (Winter 2006).

¹⁴ Useful existing works are Patrick Brantlinger, *The Reading Lesson: The Threat of Mass Literacy in Nineteenth Century British Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983); Kell J. Mays, 'The Disease of Reading and Victorian Periodicals' in *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth Century British Publishing and Reading Practices*. Ed. John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹⁵ Particularly notable works in this regard are Wouter Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Utrecht University, 1995), 4-6; Wouter Hanegraaff, 'Empirical Method in the Study of Esotericism', in *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 7.2 (1995); J.G. Platvoet, *Comparing Religions: A Limitative Approach: An Analysis of Akan, Para-Creole, and IFO-Sananda Rites and Prayers* (Mouton: New York, 1983).

Fourthly, it is necessary to clarify the position of this thesis in relation to a history of modern paganism. This thesis does not take as its starting point the paganism of today.¹⁶ Instead, the research is fuelled by the situation and images of paganism that are apparent during the period in question. This thesis also does not argue that there was an exponential rise of paganism, such that 1914 was 'more pagan' than 1885; instead, it approaches the period as a dense cultural grid of juxtaposing narratives and emerging and shifting images. Indeed, this examination prioritises primary literature, rather than seeking to redress a single scholarly debate. The primary literature under review was identified by a mixture of structured study, such as the examination of the entire *Saturday Review* for the period and all volumes of *The Yellow Book*; and the examination of texts, novels, letters, diaries, and journals governed by leads, which arose during the course of the research. As a final word on general matters of methodology, I should like to avert criticism of the rationale for my choice of individuals and works omitted and included. In this I am confident I have included the essential authors and the choice among lesser works results in an adequate spectrum.

As said, this thesis does not begin with chapters on current literature and methodology. Instead, it has been considered more useful to contextualise this examination by looking at the Victorian cultural world: first, by exploring relevant aspects of Victorian culture generally; and second, by exploring Victorian attitudes towards the ancient world specifically. These comprise the first two chapters of the thesis. A review of the relevant literature is undertaken at the beginning of each subsequent chapter, since there is both little of it and it is different in each case.

The third chapter examines 'responsible' paganism, loosely defined, as images and ideas which depicted paganism as a healthy lifestyle, involving simple living, and which perceived nature as a loving force. The way in which this variety of paganism drew on highly sanitised and idealised versions of ancient Greece will be explored, as well as the way in which these images were projected forward as the salvation of England. It will be argued that although undoubtedly radical, those who shape this variety

¹⁶ This was approach of Clifton and Harvey in their collection of texts of modern paganism, which names nineteenth and early twentieth century works 'Proto Revival Texts'. This method was entirely appropriate for their purposes, but it is insufficient a method for historical analysis which focuses on the Victorian and Edwardian age. Chas S. Clifton and Graham Harvey, *The Paganism Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003).

of paganism attempted to present paganism as a sensible and sober way to achieve a satisfied humanity.

The fourth chapter examines 'decadent' paganism. This explores the way in which paganism was used to represent the throwing off of morality and its replacement by indulgence in hedonistic freedom and sensuality. Analysis in this chapter focuses primarily on literature, with particular reference to the 'decadent' writers of the 1890s. It will be demonstrated that this variety of paganism functioned primarily as an escapist pursuit of the mind rather than a social plan for action, but that as a creative activity a highly personal relationship with paganism could be established.

The fifth chapter examines 'magical' paganism, defined as the use of paganism as a means to esoteric wisdom. The chapter focuses on the largest and most prominent magical order of the time, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. It considers the way in which the Order employed pagan imagery, ideas, and methods, alongside symbols and ideas from other religious and magical traditions. It will be revealed that while some members were spooked by the pagan aspects of the Order, a significant number became increasingly attracted to paganism alone as the way to attain the heights of human knowledge. The forms this attraction took and the reasons for them will be considered.

The final chapter endeavours to reach conclusions arising from this enquiry, considering, in particular, why and how the study of paganism during this period matters to a historian. It will locate paganism fundamentally in the context of the wider cultural and intellectual world. It will argue that paganism came to function as a spiritual inclination with a specific emphasis on the centrality of man, attempting to cater for both religious and human aspirations.

This thesis will further understanding of the complexities of the cultural situation and deepen knowledge of the attraction of the ancient world. More generally, it will further the history of modern pagan religions by mapping its path through late Victorian and Edwardian developments.

CHAPTER 1: THE CULTURAL BACKGROUND TO LATE VICTORIAN PAGANISM

This chapter is not intended as a discussion of the cultural situation in all its aspects and facets; rather, it examines the cultural ideas and impulses in operation during the nineteenth century, which are particularly relevant to paganism. Most important are industrialisation, rural romanticism, socialism, religious revivals and the fear of religious decline, and the experience of empire. Placing our varieties of paganism in this context contributes towards an understanding of the reasons for, and nature of, an attraction to paganism. It reveals the cultural discourses that enabled such radical thoughts to come to fruition, as well as a complex, motion picture of the Victorian world.

Confinement of historical examination to specific dates is always artificial, but it is a necessary tool for the historian. In this case, it is perhaps sensible to begin analysis of the cultural background in the 1830s, the decade in which Queen Victoria came to the throne. Historians of the Victorian world are not wholly in agreement about how we should view the Victorian period.¹ It generally is divided into three broad areas: early Victorianism, existing between the 1830s to 1850; mid-Victorianism, apparent from 1850 until the Reform Bill of 1867 or continuing more mathematically until 1875; and late Victorianism of the last decades of the nineteenth century and continuing into the Edwardian period. Whereas the mid-Victorian period has been described the ‘high noon of Victorianism’² and the ‘age of equipoise’³, the later decades of the nineteenth century are characterised by economic downturn, increased anxieties, and the collapse of previously held certainties. Pervading all periods was a sense of living in a time of enormous change; however, the reaction to such change varied between one of buoyancy at the pace of progress and innovation, to one of severe discomfort.

¹ The very idea of a specifically ‘Victorian’ England was questioned by Richard Price, ‘Does the Notion of Victorian England Make Sense?’, in *Cities, Class and Communication: Essays in Honour of Asa Briggs*, ed. Derek Fraser (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), 152-71. Recently this argument has been challenged by Martin Hewitt’s excellent article, ‘Why the Notion of Victorian Britain *Does* Make Sense’, in *Victorian Studies* (Spring, 2006), 395-438.

² G. Kitson Clark, *The Making of Victorian England* (1962; repr., London: Routledge, 1991), 31.

³ W.L. Burn, *The Age of Equipoise: A Study of the Mid-Victorian Generation* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1964).

In a notable essay published in *The Fortnightly Review* in 1882, Frederic Harrison wrote:

Take it all in all, the merely material, physical, mechanical change in human life in the hundred years, from the days of Watt and Arkwright to our own, is greater than occurred in the thousand years that preceded, perhaps even in two thousand years, or twenty thousand years.⁴

Indeed, the Industrial Revolution, which occurred in Britain roughly between 1770 and 1840, dramatically changed Britain, propelling it in status to the most prosperous and advanced nation of the world. Economic change went hand in hand with societal and cultural change. Britain was infused with a sense that something revolutionary had happened and moreover, Britain seemed special. In 1839 Thomas Arnold wrote, 'the English are...one of the chosen people of history, who are appointed to do a great work for mankind'⁵; that Britain was to avoid revolutions like those seen on the Continent in 1848 enhanced such sentiments. The Victorians were aware that they were playing a major role on the world stage and were keen to perform well. The Great Exhibition of 1851 stands out as the greatest example of industrial celebration and exuberance and was probably the high water mark of industrial values in Britain. With six million visitors and 13,000 exhibits, half of which from Britain and its colonies, housed in the supremely modern engineering construction, the Crystal Palace, the Exhibition celebrated the industrial age and Britain's place at its helm. It stood for the ascendancy of Christianity, the British constitution, and free trade. The catalogue for the Great Exhibition proclaimed, 'the progress of the human race...we are carrying out the will of the great and blessed God'⁶. The word 'Victorian' was first used at this time, employed to denote the sense of confidence of that period. Victorian Britain was seen as the culmination and apex of progress; hopes for humanity were high.

All this highly-flung optimism was backed up by a secular doctrine based on a belief that society would continue to improve in a manufacturing age. The cornerstone of this thought was the doctrine of laissez-faire: a consensus formed around political life

⁴ Frederic Harrison, 'A Few Words about the Nineteenth Century' in *The Fortnightly Review* (April, 1882), 411-26, 414-15.

⁵ Cited in David Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture: Perceptions and Introspections in an Age of Change* (London: John Murray, 1997), 92.

⁶ Cited in John Merriman, *A History of Modern Europe* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co, 1996), 790.

which objected to government interference and centralisation, and placed primary importance on competition to determine those fit to rule. It placed emphasis on the individual who could, through hard work, demonstrate his moral worth and, fundamentally, it asserted that humanity could improve itself. Translated into politics this was the 'age of Liberalism'.⁷ Liberalism was less a clearly defined programme than a combination of attitudes, with its origins closely tied to the Enlightenment's uncompromising assertion of individual freedom. As such, it rejected the notion that people were basically evil and had to be kept in line by religion and governmental restraints. Liberalism also drew on the philosophy of Utilitarianism, as first expounded by Jeremy Bentham.⁸ This reflected the pervasive belief that an efficient government which made few demands was an essential part of the 'liberties' of freeborn Britons, and thus argued that every law was an infraction of liberty. As with laissez-faire, it was believed that a 'hidden hand' would guide society towards progress which was best left not interfered with. In practice, such political ideals did not always work; nevertheless, the modes of thought which predominated in the mid-Victorian era shaped the mind-frame of the whole Victorian age. Secular doctrines shook off the bonds of religious original sin and proclaimed the strength of humanity with its fundamental capacity for improvement and progress. The prominence of distinct secular beliefs built up outside of traditional Christian models are important for attitudes to pagan thought because they diminished the all-pervasive Christian doctrine of human behaviour, allowing the discussion of humanity in a non-Christian setting. Furthermore, as a consequence of liberalism, dialogue and criticism about society was increasingly facilitated. This often led to questioning of the Victorian cultural 'consensus' and encouraged the radicalisation of some intellectual circles.

The idea of Britain's illimitable prosperity was only to last until the late 1860s, by which time other industrial nations, such as the Netherlands, Germany, and the USA, were catching up with increasing pace. This led to growing uneasiness and gloom about

⁷ For some of the best work on liberalism during this period see Ian Bradley, *Optimist: Themes and personalities in Victorian Liberalism* (Faber and Faber, 1980); Richard Bellamy, *Victorian Liberalism: Nineteenth-Century Political Thought and Practice* (London: Routledge, 1990); Eugenion F. Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860-1880* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Lauren M.E. Goodlad, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State: Character and Governance in a Liberal Society* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 2003).

⁸ Jeremy Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (London: T. Payne, 1789).

the British economy, as many remembered the arguments of those such as Thomas Carlyle who had expounded a belief in the cyclical motions of history, to the effect that leading nations would always decline because of the sloth inevitable during the enjoyed period of prosperity.⁹ Industrialisation, which had previously seemed such a bounty of infinite good, was now being questioned. Harrison, after recounting the achievements and progress of the century, questioned whether ‘the good they do is *quite* so vast, *quite* so unmixed, *quite* so immediate, as the chamberlains and the chorus make out in their perpetual cantata to the nineteenth century’.¹⁰ In the second half of the century, already heavily amassing was a body of thought and literature which was vehemently anti-industrial. The historian, Martin J. Wiener, has controversially even gone as far as to assert that the English elite was at war with itself.¹¹ Such thought viewed industrialism as a force for evil; something alien that had introduced itself into British life and which was reckless, cruel and a blight on true culture. For example, Matthew Arnold lamented:

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;
Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts, was rife.¹²

With industrialism excluded from the idea of ‘Englishness’, the ‘true’ England was felt to be rural England, with ideals of stability, tranquillity, closeness to the past, and non-materialism. These ideas were strongly influenced by the Romantic Movement in literature, which at the beginning of the nineteenth century had dolefully criticised industrialism and elevated the countryside. The Romantics feared the soullessness of urbanism and industrialism, and the utilitarian and materialistic habit of mind they brought. For example, Percy Bysshe Shelley in ‘Lines Written among the Euganean Hills’ wrote of evil cravings which drove the ‘sons of Albion’ away from the natural world and into a world of despair. Shelley looked forward to a time when ‘the earth can

⁹ Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution: A History* (London: Chapman-Hall, 1837).

¹⁰ Harrison, ‘A Few Words’, 413.

¹¹ Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 6. For criticism of Wiener’s ideas see Bruce Collins and Keith Robbins, ed. *British Culture and Economic Decline* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, 1990); W.B. Rubinstein, *Capitalism, Culture and Decline in Britain, 1750-1990* (London: Routledge, 1991); Peter Clarke and Clive Trebilcock, eds. *Understanding Decline* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹² ‘The Scholar-Gipsy’ in *Poems by Matthew Arnold: A New Edition* (London: Longman and Co, 1853).

grow young again...in a dell mid lawny hills'.¹³ Alfred Lord Tennyson, poet laureate in the mid-Victorian period, continued the assertion of such Romantic sentiments. His collection of poems published in 1833, which were among his most popular, depicted an escapist countryside, conjuring up timeless and delightful rustic scenes.¹⁴ The later poet laureate, Alfred Austin, also operated in this literary genre and his book of 1901, *Haunts of Ancient Peace*, a title borrowed from Tennyson, was described as an invitation to 'fly with the writer...to the green lanes and fields outside our prison'.¹⁵ Thus escapist literature was used as a mechanism to cope with industrial disaffection; that it was produced by those whose way of life was essentially urban, reveals a profound social and psychological malaise.

Rural romanticism also fuelled an interest by the middle and upper class urban Victorians in folk beliefs among the lower classes. The impulse towards socialism at this time (which we shall examine below) esteemed the folk culture they found in rural England; for example, John Ruskin and William Morris sought to restore folk songs, in an attempt to cultivate collectivism and comradeship as opposed to competition.¹⁶ In addition to encouraging a romanticised and idealised image of the English countryside, such images also encouraged a frame of mind within the middle classes not unaccustomed to encounters with the magical and 'unChristian'. In his research into the place of magic and witchcraft in popular culture, Owen Davies has argued that within the middle classes there was a romanticised acceptance of the magical beliefs of the lower classes. Davies points to the role of work by writers like Richard Jefferies (who features in this thesis in the 'responsible' variety of paganism) in promoting images of England as a rustic idyll, teeming with a persistence of the old beliefs.¹⁷ An interest in folk beliefs is

¹³ Subtitled 'October, 1818', it was composed at Byron's villa at Este, near Venice, and published in *Rosalind and Helen* (1819); repr. in *Romanticism: An Anthology*, ed. Duncan Wu (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 850-9.

¹⁴ Alfred Lord Tennyson, *Poems* (London: E. Moxon, 1833)

¹⁵ *Daily News* (1902) cited in Wiener, *English Culture*, 50. For a discussion of similar images found in paintings produced at this time see Kenneth McConkey, *Memory and Desire: Painting in Britain and Ireland at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

¹⁶ See Jan Marsh, *Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in England from 1880-1914* (London: Quartet Books, 1982).

¹⁷ Owen Davies, *A People Bewitched: Witchcraft and Magic in Nineteenth Century Somerset* (Bruton: Owen Davies, 1997), 18. See also Owen Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Owen Davies, *Cunning-Folk: Popular Magic in English History* (London: Hambledon and London, 2003).

significant furthermore in the context of 'magical' paganism: many of the ritual magicians we shall encounter attempted to restore the old Celtic deities and exalted folk beliefs as containing remnants of truths.

From such sentimentality and nostalgic lament, it was not a large step to look back to England's historical past. Ruskin, art and social critic of the mid- to late-Victorian period, hated industrialism, lamenting it had 'changed our Merry England into the Man in the Iron Mask'.¹⁸ He idealised the Middle Ages, commending them for their religiosity and chivalry. He criticised modern architecture, especially that 'glass monster' the Crystal Palace, and stated 'no pleasure is taken anywhere in modern buildings, and we find all men of true feeling delighting to escape out of modern cities into natural scenery'.¹⁹ Instead he rhapsodised over the Gothic and was a leading proponent of the Gothic revival in architecture, which took place in England at this time and can be seen as part of the broader reaction against the industrial age. Morris shared Ruskin's passion for the past, and treasured the sense of continuity with earlier generations. His book, *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-70) begins by urging the reader to forget the modern world with its smoke and ugliness and to 'think rather of the pack-horse on the down/ And dream of London, small, and white, and clean'.²⁰ In *A Dream of John Ball* (1886-7) the setting is the slower, smaller-scale, more beautiful and more humane life of the fourteenth century. His utopian novel, *News From Nowhere* (1890) was also of an idealised, recreated Middle Ages. The Middle Ages was an attractive image because it was seen as an ancient time, slow-moving, stable, cosy, and spiritual. In his examination of the place of the past in English culture at this time, Paul Readman argues that there was a real desire to get closer to the nation's past.²¹ Readman points to a growth in English tourism, for example to places like Tintagel, as well as the rise of interest in folk practices and a revival of pageantry. This leads him to quite convincingly assert that 'a sense of continuity with the

¹⁸ Cited in J.F.C. Harrison, *Late Victorian Britain 1875-1901* (Glasgow: Fontana Press, 1990), 16.

¹⁹ 'On the Nature of the Gothic' in John Ruskin, *Stones of Venice Vol. 3* (London: Smith Elder and Co, 1853).

²⁰ William Morris, *The Earthly Paradise* (London: F.S. Ellis, 1868-70), Prologue, 1.

²¹ Paul Readman, 'The Place of the Past in English Culture c. 1890-1914' in *Past & Present*, 186 (February, 2005), 147-99. See also, John D. Rosenberg, *Elegy for an Age: The Presence of the Past in Victorian Literature* (London: Anthem Press, 2005); Inga Bryden, *Reinventing King Arthur: The Arthurian Legends in Victorian Culture* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2005).

national past provided rootedness and belonging at a time of change'.²² As we shall later explore, it was not just the national past that came to be revered, but also the pre-Christian Mediterranean pagan world. Perhaps the most important difference is that whereas Victorian medievalism was quite firmly grounded in conservatism, the pagan image acquired a more radical direction.

In 1831 John Stuart Mill wrote that a sense of existing as historical beings was 'the dominant idea' of the age.²³ It may come as a surprise then, to learn, that Readman's work came as a challenge to recently stated arguments that the late Victorians came to lose interest in the past. Peter Mandler and Raymond Chapman have both asserted that history became marginalised and, even, 'simply irrelevant'.²⁴ While it may be assumed that an examination which takes as its starting point the prominence of the ancient world in Victorian England would argue to the contrary, it must be pointed out that the examination of paganism is concerned with images often divorced from their actual (or at least, academic) history. Thus Mandler's and Chapman's arguments do not necessarily contradict the work of this thesis: it may well be that as a by-product of a sentiment that history was becoming 'irrelevant', an affection for paganism was facilitated. For example, the Greek epics became the stuff of children's bedtime stories - a series of exhilarating stories to excite the imagination; and it is interesting to note that an affection for paganism was often formed in childhood.²⁵ Thus in terms of both a collective and individual past, nostalgia for a beautiful past and love of natural innocence merged to create conditions especially favourable for the emergence of a modern paganism.

Anti-industrial sentiment was also often imbued with a social conscience and a humanistic impulse to aid the poor. In this way, the underlying conservative impulse was

²² Readman, 'Place of the Past', 199.

²³ John Stuart Mill, 'Spirit of the Age' (1831) in *Collected Works*, ed. Ann P. Robson and John M. Robson, Vol. 11 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986).

²⁴ Raymond Chapman, *The Sense of the Past in Victorian Literature* (London: 1986), 187. Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

²⁵ In this context see Catherine Robson, *Men in Wonderland. The Lost Girlhood of the Victorian Gentleman* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), which stresses the links between childhood and femininity. Robson argues that once grown up, men looked with nostalgia to their feminine past; such attitudes perhaps contribute to the presentation of an innocent ancient natural world as feminine. See also Ann C. Colley, *Nostalgia and Recollection in Victorian Culture* (London: MacMillan, 1998).

channelled along more progressive, optimistic and innovative lines. Socialism in Britain was not predominantly marked by a rise of class consciousness among the working classes; instead it was a movement fought by the intellectuals. Utopian socialism provided the original critique of the Industrial Revolution. For example, Robert Owen spoke out against the bad living conditions of the labouring poor and in the 1820s attempted to act out his dream of creating a perfectly harmonious way of life by setting up a small scale community in New Lanark. As the century progressed, socialism became intimately connected to aesthetic visions of a better society. The pivotal figure in all of this was Ruskin. He saw the world in essentially moral terms but believed art superior to society. He placed emphasis on the coherence and unity of a good society and argued that great art was the product of a morally sound society. He believed that the modern world with its fragmentation and ugly monuments was intimately connected to its amorality, and he urged artists as cultural critics to react against society.

Similarly, Morris asserted that the future was through art and that art defined the quality of living. In a lecture to the Trades' Guild of Learning in 1877, he made a characteristic plea for utility and simplicity which posited that the whole purpose of socialist change was to elevate art in society:

To give people pleasure in things they must perforce use, that is the great office of decoration; to give people pleasure in the things they must perforce make, that is the other use of it...Simplicity of life, begetting simplicity of taste, that is, a love for sweet and lofty things, is of all matters most necessary for the birth of the new and better art we crave for.²⁶

Like Ruskin, he recognised a debasement of taste in the modern world, but trusted that through craft production people could produce useful yet artistic objects and thereby raise taste to a new level. Thus in visions of a redeemed society, focus was often on the Romantic notion of unity and, preferring the return to a highly-ordered guild society, brought competition into disrepute. Part of this thought was also the idea of a simplification of life. Ruskin argued that mental work was unbalanced and worthless, causing the upper classes to be parasites. He believed that the true satisfaction of human life was, 'to watch the corn grow, and the blossoms set; to draw hard breath over a

²⁶ Cited in Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780-1950* (1958; repr., Middlesex: Pelican Books, 1971), 161.

plough share or spade; to read, to think, to have, to hope, to pray'.²⁷ Such stress on the importance of manual work and the simple life became increasingly popular as the century wore on. At the turn of the century there was a 'back-to-the-land' movement, which saw a proliferation of groups who moved to the countryside with the aim of living in fresh air and simplicity.²⁸ As we shall see in Chapter 3, the simple life of manual work continued to prove attractive for many Edwardians.

In 1881 H.M. Hyndman formed the Social Democratic Federation and in 1884 its member, Morris, split away to form his own group, the Socialist League. In the same year Sidney and Beatrice Webb formed the Fabian Society, which was committed to gradualism, taking the emblem of a tortoise and its name from a Roman dictator famous for his delaying tactics. Britain's socialists were institutional reformers and moralists intent on bringing about a higher and often simpler lifestyle. J.F.C. Harrison has argued that one of the strongest motivations towards socialism was the revolt against Victorian civilisation in general.²⁹ Indeed, many pioneers of socialism were involved in other reform movements; for example, many of the early Fabians were involved in spiritualism and transcendentalism. Thus they were anything other than satisfied by what they saw around them. Such counter-cultural values, and yet eager optimism and hope for a new future, is the same cultural impulse whence some of our strands of paganism spring. In addition, it is notable that these socialists were not necessarily individuals for which religion and spirituality held no worth.

Religion was a vital issue in Victorian England. Indeed, G. Kitson-Clark has argued,

Probably in no other century, except the seventeenth and perhaps the twelfth, did the claims of religion occupy so large a part in the nation's life, or did men speaking in the name of religion contrive to exercise so much power.³⁰

The Victorian age was a religious age but it was also one pervaded by great fear of religious decline. The nineteenth century witnessed the tearing away of old certainties

²⁷ John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol. 3 (London: George Allen, 1853), Part 4, Chapter 17.

²⁸ See Marsh, *Back to the Land*.

²⁹ Harrison, *Late Victorian Britain*, 141.

³⁰ Kitson-Clark, *Making of Victorian England*, 20.

and the number of 'Doubters' rose dramatically. However, this is certainly not to say that rationalism triumphed and spirituality fell away. There were a number of religious revivals. In addition, the prominence of Romanticism throughout the nineteenth century encouraged spirituality. As the critic of the romantics, T.E. Hulme, perceived, romanticism is 'spilt religion...always flying, flying over abysses, flying up into the eternal gases...the word infinite on every line'.³¹

For the majority of Victorians, religion meant Evangelical religion. The Evangelical revival helped to renew the life of the Church of England in the face of eighteenth century rationalism. Much of the Calvinist rigidity and dogmatism of earlier evangelism had been modified, but its basic doctrines and pieties remained the norm for the majority of practicing Christians. Evangelicalism played a large role in the social sphere and did much to change society, as seen in its attack on slavery and its anti-Corn Laws agitation. This is important, for it is contended that Victorian Evangelicalism was less concerned with doctrine and forms of worship than with the way men should live; for example, Frank M. Turner has commented, 'Evangelicalism...had at their inception been a faith of social action and reform'.³² Evangelicalism lent a profoundly moral tone to society and, somewhat paradoxically, it combined with Utilitarianism to create Victorian middle-class values. Both Evangelicalism and Utilitarianism were based around individualism, whether at work or through private religious conscience and in this way work in the secular context became the counterpart to faith in the religious one.³³

The emphasis on morality highlights one of the most important fears associated with fear of religious decline. In 1877 the first issue of the *Nineteenth Century Journal* carried out a survey and although many unbelievers were questioned, it reported that only one participant did not predict that moral decline would go hand in hand with religious

³¹ Cited in Williams, *Culture and Society*, 195. See also Stephen Prickett, *Romanticism and Religion: The Tradition of Coleridge and Wordsworth in the Victorian Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Hilary Fraser, *Beauty and Belief: Aesthetics and Religion in Victorian Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

³² Frank M. Turner, *Contesting Cultural Authority: Essays in Victorian Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 84.

³³ See Ian Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians* (New York: MacMillan, 1976); Hilton Boyd, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

decline.³⁴ This mind-frame illustrates why there was such an insistence on virtues. Moreover, as W.L. Burn has remarked, such insistence was ‘dictated by threats of dishonesty, sensuality, drunkenness and improvidence; the virtues were flags to which men rallied in battle, not decorations for ceremonial parades’.³⁵ For many, the pressures of Evangelical morality and conformity caused them to react against society. The impulse towards paganism was part of this reaction. In terms of paganism, it is significant furthermore that religion through Evangelicalism was naturalised in the secular sphere. This both sanctioned the mundane world and allowed religion to stand as much for ethics as for revelation. This paved the way for ancient Greek religion to be increasingly revered.

Christian faith in the Victorian period was by no means uniform. There was an immense proliferation of denominations and movements, such as Protestant Nonconformity, Dissenters, and Catholic revivalists.³⁶ The Tractarian movement of the 1830s, headed by John Henry Newman at Oxford, is important in our context because their ideas were closely connected to Romantic ideals of a cherished and glossy past. They wanted to recover the Catholic ethos of the Anglican Church, and had a deep sense of historical continuity and the mystique of the past.³⁷ The Broad Church movement is also highly significant. This aimed at moderation and tried to encompass all of the various modes of faith. It was indifferent to sharply defined dogma and prescribed forms, and permitted open minded criticism. It too focused considerably on the social arena and under the Broad Churchmen Charles Kingsley, Thomas Hughes and F.D. Maurice ‘Christian Socialism’ was born. The Broad Church movement caused alarm because it was feared by some that its mildness and dilutive tendencies would lead to a rejection of Christianity altogether. Newman, for example, denounced it as a halfway house to

³⁴ Cited in Herbert Schlossberg, *The Silent Revolution and the Making of Victorian England* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000), 312.

³⁵ Burn, *Age of Equipoise*, 41.

³⁶ See Alan P.F. Sell, *Philosophy, Dissent and Nonconformity: 1689-1920* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2003); Jeffrey Paul Von Arx, *Progress and Pessimism: Religion, Politics and History in Late Nineteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

³⁷ The Tractarians’ emphasis on Catholicism caused considerable uproar in the Anglican Church, but their prominence dwindled from 1845 upon Newman’s conversion to the Catholic Church. Newman himself remained highly influential and in 1879 became a cardinal.

atheism.³⁸ For our purposes, this movement is particularly significant because its progressive nature brought with it intelligent debate and criticism, applied to religion. Indeed, nineteenth century religion was not a static entity but a series of personal and public religions attempting to negotiate the pressures of the time. As the century progressed, pagan religious ideas increasingly entered into the negotiation of a personal religion.

A negotiation of Christianity was vital in the Victorian period because religion was faced with many new challenges. The 1840s and 1850s were shaken by geologists, who discovered the Earth to be far more ancient than the Bible allowed. Also important was Bible criticism, imported to England from intellectual circles in Germany, which argued that the Bible could no longer be regarded as a continuous historical narrative. Probably the severest blow to religion was dealt in 1859 with Charles Darwin's publication of *Origin of the Species*. The application of Darwinism hit Christianity predominantly in three ways: it suggested that there was no special creation, no benevolent design, and that nature is amoral, as seen through the survival of the fittest. This had profound effects on the perceived position of humanity in the universe.

Religion in Victorian England was greatly disorientated by these developments; however, the Church did try to meet modern pressures. Perhaps most notable is the 1889 publication, edited by Charles Gore, entitled *Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Doctrine of the Incarnation*. David Newsome has pointed out that this, surprisingly, did not come by way of the Broad Church, but from the Catholic wing of the Anglican Church.³⁹ The book marked a departure from traditional teachings and the accommodation of new problems. It accepted the doctrine of evolution, accepted the Old Testament as not strictly narrative, and, most importantly, asserted the centrality of Incarnation, arguing that God, by becoming man in the person of Jesus, had ennobled his own creation and had consecrated the works of man. Thus Darwinism was reconciled with religion, and humanity was neatly able to retain its poll position in the universe. This became dominant in Anglican theology, and had inspiring and infectious buoyancy. Scott

³⁸ John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua: Being A History of His Religious Opinions* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1865), 204.

³⁹ Newsome, *Victorian World Picture*, 226-30, 227.

Holland, in an essay dedicated to Francis Paget, one of the contributors to *Lux Mundi*, wrote of the relief offered by this reconciliation:

Life was all unbuttoned...There were no invading cares...We were complete in ourselves...The hills waited upon us; the rivers ran for us; the great sea laughed as we plunged into its green Cornish waters. Nature was one our side: and we were one with it.⁴⁰

These words highlight the persistence of a great desire and need to believe in religion, as well as an increased importance placed on man's relation to the natural world. Both of these feelings are important in the story of paganism.

Nevertheless, for many, Christianity was unable to imbue confidence. During the last decades of the nineteenth century there were increasing numbers of Doubters and between 1890 and 1914 there was a general consciousness of religious crisis.⁴¹ It is from these agnostics that paganism sprang. Those who rejected Christianity did so largely on an active intellectual basis rather than through the passive falling away of former faith. Indeed, an examination of Doubters in the educated classes reveals that, for most, Doubt was not a stance taken lightly. For some, the abandonment of orthodox belief brought relief and freedom; however, it was often imbued with sadness, despair and loss of purpose. For example, Matthew Arnold lamented that his world was an 'iron time/ Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears' and that modern people were adrift between two worlds, 'one dead/ The other powerless to be born'.⁴² In the closing decades of the century this was acutely felt and even intensified because agnosticism spread among the intellectual leadership of the nation.

Although our study is not directly concerned with the experience of the lower classes, it is also important to bear their situation in mind. The Census in 1851 delivered a shock to the Church when it revealed that on 30th March just over seven hundred thousand people in England and Wales attended a church service out of a population of nearly eighteen hundred thousand.⁴³ The Census revealed that many working-class people had no contact with the Christian Church and no knowledge of the rudiments of

⁴⁰ Cited in Newsome, *Victorian World Picture*, 229.

⁴¹ See Elisabeth Jay, *Faith and Doubt in Victorian Britain* (London: MacMillan, 1986); Bernard Lightman, *The Origins of Agnosticism: Victorian Unbelief and the Limits of Knowledge* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987); Turner, *Contesting Cultural Authority*; Hugh McLeod, *Religion and Society in England, 1850-1914* (London: MacMillan Press, 1996).

⁴² 'The Scholar-Gipsy' in *Poems*.

⁴³ Kitson-Clark, *Making of Victorian England*, 148-9.

Christian faith. This had an affect on the minds of the upper and middle classes. For some, these lower class unbelievers were seen as a menacing undercurrent, in Bishop Selwyn's words of 1854, 'the dark masses of our uninstructed people'.⁴⁴ David Morse has asserted that others viewed them as 'heathen in character', with similar characteristics to gypsies and marshalled under the picturesque.⁴⁵ As we shall see, some strands of pagan thought credited the working classes for a nearness to paganism, while critics sometimes feared paganism all the more because of the idea of a seething undercurrent of the population with little affectation to the Christian faith.

Martin Hewitt has asserted that the middle and upper class sense of bereavement at their loss of faith co-existed with a 'deeply engrained religiosity', as seen in the highly dogmatic methods used to challenge religious doctrine, and in the 'tendency of such challenges to be channelled through a number of essentially "secular religions", including Owenism, secularism, positivism, temperance, the cooperative movement, Spiritualism and secularism'.⁴⁶ Thus agnosticism did not necessarily lead to the absence of religion, and for the purposes of this thesis it is important to highlight the alternative spiritual assurances that were often turned to. These include the pseudo-sciences such as mesmerism, phrenology, and perhaps most importantly, spiritualism.⁴⁷ Spiritualism sought to allow communication with spirits of the dead and was imported from America in the 1850s, gaining acceptance because it was seen to apparently produce visible results. There was a large proliferation of spiritualist societies and many journals were published devoted to the study of spiritualism. In 1882 F.W.H. Myers and Nora Balfour founded the Society for Psychical Research, which attracted many prominent members, including Prime Minister Gladstone who was reported to have said its research 'was the

⁴⁴ Cited in Kitson Clark, *Making of Victorian England*, 163.

⁴⁵ David Morse, *Victorian High Culture* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1993), 8.

⁴⁶ Hewitt, 'Why the Notion of Victorian Britain Does Make Sense', 423. For a discussion on secularism see Edward Royle, *Victorian Infidels: The Origins of the British Secularist Movement, 1871-1866* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974). Herein he argues that freethinkers tended to act in the same manner as a non-conformist sect.

⁴⁷ See Ruth Brandon, *The Spiritualists: The Passion for the Occult in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1983); Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

most important work being done in the world today'.⁴⁸ This impulse was deeply rooted in the experience of the nineteenth century because people looked to the unparalleled advance in knowledge of natural phenomenon in their own lifetime and believed that civilisation could well be on the threshold of equally amazing discoveries about the supernatural, extrasensory and paranormal. One of the most significant developments that grew out of this thought was the advent of Theosophy founded by Madame H.P. Blavatsky in 1875, which we shall examine later on in this.

Another important aspect in the development of nineteenth century religious discourses was the rise to prominence of beliefs in the unity and wholeness of the universe. For example, J.R. Seeley rejected the Church and turned instead to what he called 'natural religion'. Publishing a book of that name in 1882, he proclaimed that the essence of religion is the worship of nature and the recognition of unity in the universe.⁴⁹ This has broad romantic overtones but it could also complement ideas derived from science, such as the scientific naturalism of T.H. Huxley, since this too placed importance on nature and saw nature as the manifestation of vitality and infinity. A notable figure in attitudes to paganism, John Addington Symonds, argued that through scientific developments, the main fact in intellectual development of the last half a century was 'the restoration of spirituality to our thoughts about the universe'.⁵⁰ Of course, for the majority of Victorians, God and Earth were separate with God remaining 'up there' in Heaven. However, the rise in the location of the divine within the world was of primary importance in the development of nineteenth century paganism. Furthermore, as a result of this location, the status of man was enhanced.

In an era of such religious turmoil, there was much concern for the position of man and the ideal of man. Most usually, debate tended to enhance his status. This can be seen in Broad Church's notion of 'Muscular Christianity'. Kingsley pioneered this form of Christianity, which placed emphasis on the manliness of Christ and posited it as the

⁴⁸ Roger Cooter, *The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science: Phrenology and the Organisation of Consent in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 29.

⁴⁹ Reba N. Soffer, 'History and Religion: J.R. Seeley and the Burden of the Past' in *Religion and Irreligion in Victorian Society*, eds. R.W. Davis and R. J. Helmstadter (London: Routledge, 1992), 133-50.

⁵⁰ John Addington Symonds, 'The Progress of Thought in Our Time' in *The Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 41 (1887), 885-98.

ideal to which all men should strive. Rather than seeing Christ as gentle, meek and mild, he was presented as a warrior-saviour, battling with wicked foes. Kingsley laid emphasis on the ideal of a strong healthy body, and believed that heterosexual physical relations in marriage should be encouraged.⁵¹ Peter Gay has highlighted Kingsley himself as embodying the sort of virtues he advocated, in his love of hiking, climbing and other outdoor physical exertions.⁵² These ideals of 'Muscular Christianity' complemented the idea of social Darwinism, which applied survival of the fittest to the social sphere and reserved the greatest praise for those who won in the fight for social status. Such ideas were also evident in the increasingly pervasive preoccupation with sports culture, in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Sport was a highly visual embodiment of competitive individualism and physical achievement. Great emphasis was placed on the sportsmen themselves; for example, at the turn of the century, the cricketer W.G. Grace achieved unprecedented levels of fame and adoration and was held up as a model for imitation.⁵³ Furthermore, in 1896 the Olympic Games were revived in the modern era, a symptom both of reverence for ancient Greece and the human form. In sculpture, the human body was increasingly depicted in ideal, muscular, form; for example in 'An Athlete Wrestling with a Python' (1887) and 'The Sluggard' (1885) by Frederick Leighton. Thus emphasis was placed evermore on man in the mundane world, his physical being increasingly coming into the equation. To an extent, the human ideal of manliness was being elevated to the level of divinity.

In 1841 Carlyle proclaimed the importance of 'Hero-Worship' in his book *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*. He argued that to esteem great men as models for imitation was a basis for good. It is significant for our purposes that he located the origin of such worship in paganism:

What I called the perplexed jungle of Paganism sprang, we may say, out of many roots...but Hero worship is...the tap root...No nobler feeling than this admiration for one higher than himself dwells in the breast of man...Religions, I find, stand upon it; not Paganism only, but

⁵¹ Norman Vance, *Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 78-133.

⁵² Peter Gay, 'The Manliness of Christ' in *Religion and Irreligion*, 102-16, 113-14.

⁵³ See Simon Rae, *W.G. Grace. A Life* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998).

far higher and truer religions – all religions hitherto known. Hero-worship, heartfelt, prostrate admiration for a noblest, godlike form of man – is not that the germ of Christianity itself.⁵⁴

This highlights both his belief that pagan religion has something of value as well as the notion that Christianity draws on this pagan ideal. As we shall later examine, emphasis on the pagan admiration of noble forms of man was one of the ideals of paganism expounded most favourably during our period of study.

Carlyle examined the hero throughout history, arguing that while some heroic forms may become obsolete, new forms come into play. For his age, he saw the hero as King and as man of letters. The latter was the most important in terms of its modern significance, and Carlyle called for a new social and intellectual elite to be formed out of these men. They were those who ‘live in the inward sphere of things, in the True, Divine, and Eternal, which exists always unseen to most, under the Temporal and Trivial’.⁵⁵ Carlyle dismissed the Romantic poets, but he was an idealist and a moralist and so Turner has considered him important in easing the transition from a religious apprehension of the universe to a scientific and secular one. However, Turner also argues that Carlyle as an idealist must be appreciated in his own right, since to a large degree the Romantic spirit was kept alive by him.⁵⁶ Carlyle believed in transcendentalism, which was a belief chiefly derived from German idealist philosophy and was widely influential in America. Transcendentalism asserted the importance of the universal and posited that there is no need for intermediaries in order to understand the unity of the world since everybody is in direct touch with the universal. Therefore, Carlyle’s thought was in many ways a new version of the Romantics’ pantheism, whereby pantheism asserted that every human being partook of divinity. Carlyle placed the true realm of religion and spirit in the inner man and argued that all else was unessential externality. His work highlights the important link between romanticism and individualism.

Although individualism resonated with romanticism, because both placed emphasis on individual freedom, the Romantic attitude towards art and life specifically asserted the supremacy of intuitive feeling over reasoning intellect. Romanticism

⁵⁴ Thomas Carlyle, ‘The Hero as Divinity’ in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (London: James Fraser, 1841).

⁵⁵ Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 134.

⁵⁶ Turner, *Contesting Cultural Authority*, 137.

celebrated subjectivity and saw the arts as embodying the relation between nature and the spirit in the quest for freedom. Friedrich von Schiller, the late eighteenth century German romantic idealist, who greatly influenced the Romantic movement in Britain, defined freedom as the unleashing of the senses and passion of the soul, and he idealised a 'heroic genius' who fulfils himself in spite of constraints placed upon him by the state, religion, and social convention.⁵⁷ Similarly, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote of the impassioned battle of the mind of a heroic individual. For example, in *Faust* (1790) the protagonist struggles to make his way against a society that fails to understand him. In England, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's and Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) advocated a new form of poetry which abandoned formal rules and expressed emotional responses to nature.⁵⁸ In the 1820s, Shelley wrote of the power of the poet; for example, in the 'Hymn of Apollo' he declared, 'I am the eye with which the Universe / Beholds itself and knows itself divine'.⁵⁹ Perfectibilian fervour can also be seen in John Keats's poem, 'Hyperion':

So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,
A power more strong in beauty, born of us
And fated to excel us, as we pass
In glory that old darkness.⁶⁰

Thus, the Romantics placed their faith in a form of individualism, which should struggle to emancipate itself from the false conventions of the age and which could do so because higher perception was afforded by imagination and the heart. Such emphasis is, similarly, a key factor in paganism.

Ideas about the power of individual comprehension and insight gained increasing currency towards the end of the century. By the late 1870s there had emerged a distinct group of 'intellectuals' and the idea of an 'intellectual' life. The hallmark of these intellectuals was self-consciousness, with attitudes of superiority, aloofness and detachment. In addition to the Romantic influence, Matthew Arnold played an important

⁵⁷ Cited in Merriman, *History of Modern Europe*, 663.

⁵⁸ 'Advertisement' by William Wordsworth from *Lyrical Ballads* (1798); repr. in *Romanticism*, ed. Wu, 191-2.

⁵⁹ Shelley, 'Hymn of Apollo' (1820), printed in *Posthumous Poems*, ed. Mary Shelley (London: J. & H.L. Hunt, 1824).

⁶⁰ John Keats, 'Hyperion' (1819); repr., in *Romanticism: An Anthology*, 1035.

part in encouraging this development since he had urged intellectuals to make aliens of themselves by thinking in terms of a self-culture.⁶¹ Thus attachment to art was increasingly pursued outside of society. In *Demos* (1886), George Gissing expressed

there is a work in the cause of humanity other than that which goes on so clamorously in lecture-halls and at street corners...the work of those whose soul is taken captive of loveliness, who pursue the spiritual ideal apart from the world's tumult.⁶²

This gave rise to much escapism in literature. Often this was an expression of, and contributing factor towards, a despondent feeling of alienation. Such feelings in part led to the aesthetic movement in art and literature, which placed no external value on their work. This is an important factor in the attraction of paganism, especially in its most escapist form.

Nevertheless, for others, alienation enabled a reaching up above society and discovery of greater glories. Thomas Heyck has argued that these people sought to rise above middle-class status by positing the existence of a higher plane of existence which they saw as their duty to tend.⁶³ During the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries, ideas about individual potencies developed from that of Carlyle's heroes, who were largely instruments of God's will, to that of Friedrich Nietzsche's supermen, who operated beyond good and evil, above and apart from society. Evermore, the irrational basis of human nature was looked to in preference to an ordered universe. Perhaps even more important than the influence of Nietzsche on ideas circulating in Britain at the dawn of the twentieth century, was that of the French philosopher of the irrational, Henri Bergson. He challenged prevailing assumptions of materialism, and popularised the idea that each individual and nation had a creative 'dynamic energy' awaiting release.⁶⁴ As we shall see, ideas about the latent energies and powers in man played a vital role in paganism and such ideas help to explain the often mystical form which paganism took.

⁶¹ See Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism* (London: Smith, Elder, 1869; repr., in *Selected Prose*, 1970).

⁶² George Gissing, *Demos: A Story of English Socialism* (London: Smith, Elder and Co, 1886), 470.

⁶³ Thomas William Heyck, *The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Victorian England* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), 224.

⁶⁴ Henri Bergson, *L'Evolution Creatice* (Paris: Alcan, 1907).

The experience of Empire was integral to the Victorian world. India was seen as Britain's jewel in her crown and in 1876 Prime Minister Disraeli flattered Queen Victoria by bestowing on her the title 'Empress of India'. Between 1880 and 1914 European powers extended their direct control over much of the globe. During this time Britain got the lion's share in the 'scramble for Africa'⁶⁵ and consolidated her hold in India. Between 1871 and 1900, the British Empire consisted of one quarter of the world's population: sixty-six million people and four and a half million square miles.⁶⁶ World conquest seemed an inescapable consequence of Britain's supremacy. It was consonant with much of the spirit and aspiration of nineteenth century Britain and so can in the first instance be analysed as a case study of the ideas predominant in Britain.

Empire appeared to legitimise dominant British thought and faith in material progress. The power and progress of the West was seen as the antipode of the mummified 'primitive' cultures of the Empire. Britain was represented as a civilising force, which by virtue of its power and progress had the right to dominate these 'lesser' cultures. Part and parcel of ideas about Empire was, in Lord Salisbury's words, as 'a great force – a great civilising, Christianising force'.⁶⁷ However, the imperialist aim to convert indigenous populations to Christianity was seldom systematic and often took the form of heavy-fisted rule, whereby the failure of natives to respond to Christian prayers was seen as confirmation of their damnation and justification of the need for authoritarian rule.⁶⁸ The reality of the impact of Empire on the colonies is largely beyond the scope of this study, but needless to say, it was not as positive as the Victorian propagandists led people to believe. In the jargon of theoretical perspectives, the Empire was largely perceived as the 'Other'; an artificial construct of the Western, conquering powers imposed on the conquered without regard to actual indigenous cultures and without respect for alternative lines of thought.⁶⁹ The idea of the 'Other' also reveals that a confident, glossy Empire was not the sole image or sentiment in operation and that the experience of Empire had

⁶⁵ Phrase first popularised in a leading article in *The Times* on 15th September 1884.

⁶⁶ Merriman, *History of Modern Europe*, 1002.

⁶⁷ Cited in Harrison, *Late Victorian Britain* (1990), 221.

⁶⁸ Steve Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism and Identity in Late Victorian Culture* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 147.

⁶⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

an important and often disturbing impact on British cultural thought, hopes, and fears, in its own right.

Darwinism caused many to fear the irrational, bestial side of man. Robert Louis Stevenson characterised this in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), revealing that behind even the most respectable Victorian gentleman, lurks a dark animal side consumed by passions devoid of reason. Empire contributed to such ideas. Indigenous populations were regarded with fear since they appeared to represent something primitive, uncontrollable, violent, and irrational. Adventure stories, such as those by R. M. Ballantyne, about encounters of tribes by Westerners, emphasised their lack of reason and barbaric readiness to put Westerners in the boiling pot. In Africa especially the light of reason was seen to be absent, as the titles of Henry Morton Stanley's books, *Through The Dark Continent* (1878) and *In Darkest Africa* (1890) illustrate. At best the people of the Empire were seen as child-like; at worst they were depraved and dangerous.⁷⁰ However, within this concept of a wild Empire, ideas developed in which the dark continents exercised a seductive, exotic lure. Here the Empire was imbued with the glamour of romance, exhilaration and adventure which a dull and lifeless Europe was unable to offer.

These ideas were linked by conservatives and patriots to concepts of manliness, in the fight against what they saw as effete aestheticism, a disease which was sapping the strength of the nation in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. For example, W.E. Henley argued that the health of English culture depended on the concept of heroism. He believed that imperialism offered the imaginative scope within which to reinvent and bolster this idea.⁷¹ Indeed, Empire stimulated ideas of the natural environment as a social determinant. Important in this was the analysis of the specific situation of the 'civilised' man in an 'uncivilised' land. Some imperialists assessed the attractiveness of the far-flung regions of their empires by their degree of isolation and amount of open space. It was felt that this could offer dynamic action and personal fulfilment. In the 1860s Charles Dilke hoped the vastness of India would secure width of thought and nobility of purpose; in 1907 Lord George Curzon described the American Frontier as producing men of 'new

⁷⁰ See Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

⁷¹ Cited in Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism and Identity*, 114.

character, earnest, restless, exuberant, self-confident'.⁷² In this way, the experience of Empire could offer a conservative prescriptive solution to the problems of modern society.

Arising out of such ideas, came more radical views which, rather than stressing the benefits of the colonial personality, placed emphasis on the shortcomings of Victorian Britain. In *Barrack Room Ballads* (1892) Kipling dealt with the experiences of the common soldier, Tommy, while in India. Tommy is depicted as an outsider and the poems are imbued with vigorous nostalgia and appetite for the past. The Indian, Gunga Din, whom Tommy encounters, represents Tommy's disenchantment with civilian life and longing for the pleasures and freedoms afforded by the places he has now seen. For example, Tommy cries,

I am sick o' wastin' leather on these gritty pavin'-stones...
Ship me somewhere east of Suez, where the best is like the worst
Where there aren't no Ten Commandments an' a man can raise a thirst.⁷³

Thus his experience offered the vitality and passion, which Victorian society appeared to be lacking. In 1901 Jack London published his popular novel, *The Call of the Wild*, about a domesticated dog who is stolen as a sled-dog and taken to Alaska where he encounters hardship and punishing conditions. The outcome of the novel is positive: the dog comes to feel at one with the elements, his happy natural state is restored and his dreary existence as a pet is but a thankfully distance memory. Although written about an animal, the allusion here to the better and more vital state of early man is unmistakable. For some, the Empire and uncivilised places came to represent not only the antithesis of modern society but the first and happiest thought of original man. Indeed, to a large degree Orientalism sprang from the same cultural mechanism as Hellenism. Those attracted to paganism were often fascinated by the East as well, and combined such ideas together to create specifically nineteenth century ideas about paganism. Thus Empire could encourage ideas about a new way of living and thinking and spur on interest in societal questioning. However, it is important to point out that rarely did this manifest itself in a cry of wholesale return to primitive ways. Rather, as with conservative views, it

⁷² Cited in Raymond F. Betts, *The False Dawn: European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975), 15-17.

⁷³ Rudyard Kipling, *Barrack Room Ballads* (London: Methuen, 1892), 52-3.

was a combination of the modern and the primitive which was seen to induce the best of mankind. This is a significant idea in Victorian paganism.

The experience of Empire also affected religion and Christianity. William Winwood Reade drew upon his African travels to produce the popular book, *The Martyrdom of Man* (1877), which placed emphasis upon the cruelty and delusions of religion to conclude that supernatural Christianity is false, prayers useless, the soul not immortal, and future rewards and punishments non-existent. Reade makes clear in the 'Preface' that the conditions needed to write such a book were given to him through the stark, coercive, shattering experience of expeditions to Africa. Although for Reade, Empire manifested itself as a move against religion, it is important to recognise that for others the experience of alternative religions gave new impetus to religious thirst. Towards the end of the century anthropology was growing in popularity and a school of comparative religion was established.⁷⁴ Indeed, although Victorian anthropology is usually seen as hierarchical and supremacist, many historians have argued that it did not view colonial cultures and religions as worthless, and by contrast, were keen to understand them.⁷⁵ The East was stereotyped as 'mysterious', highlighting the intrigue many felt towards its faiths as well as the depth of thought attributed to it. Latter-day mystics who found native Europe dull and constraining were often enticed by Eastern thought and held it in high regard as a source of alternative or complementary wisdom. The most prominent example of this is Blavatsky, whose ideas we shall consider later.

The Jubilees of 1887 and 1897 gave only the façade of national unity; by this time the nation was severely divided on the nature of the social, religious, and political certainties. By the latter decades of the nineteenth century, change and transition was experienced as a profound psychological state. Many intellectuals reacted against the pressures of Victorian conformity, but this often caused deep felt confusion and anxiety. In the absence of hitherto believed-in certainties, it was unclear who was leading the way,

⁷⁴ Robert Ackerman, *Myth and Ritual School: J.G. Frazer and the Cambridge Ritualists* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991).

⁷⁵ See, for example, George W. Stocking Jr., 'Arnold Tylor, and the Uses of Invention', in *Race Culture, and Evolution* (New York: Free Press, 1968), 69-90; Christopher Herbert, 'Epilogue: Ethnography and Evolution' in *Victorian Studies*, 41, No. 43 (1998). Most recently, Tomoko Masuzawa has explored attitudes to world religions in general in *The Invention of World Religions, Or, How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

or indeed whether there was a way. Reade wrote, 'a season of mental anguish is at hand and through this we must pass in order that our posterity may rise'.⁷⁶ In 1909, C.F.G. Masterman's perceived society in the same tumultuous terms:

Humanity...appears but as a shipwrecked crew which has taken refuge on a narrow ledge of rock, beaten by wind and wave; which cannot tell how many, if any at all, will survive when the long night gives place to morning...we are uncertain whether civilisation is about to blossom into flower, or wither in tangle of dead leaves and faded gold...whether a door is to be suddenly opened, revealing unimaginable glories.⁷⁷

Some more than others dared to hope. From the 1880s, values were re-ordered and intellectual energies set to work in new directions. As Derek Jarrett first pointed out, an examination of *The Fortnightly Review* for the Jubilee year of 1887 reveals a whole series of hopes and aspirations.⁷⁸ Among its pages there is a series of debates on a New Reformation and on Socialism, and there are contributions about the progress of science, music, literature, material growth and colonial development. These articles vary from straightforward analysis to a look forward to a new world. Olive Schreiner's contribution to the August edition is particularly interesting for our purposes. She describes three dreams she had in an African desert. Each dream spoke in allegorical terms of the rising of humanity from its mediocre, if not moribund, state. In the final dream, as she sees people walking over hills, hand-in-hand and unafraid, it is clearly spelt out that these dreams are not to be confined to the realms of fantasy:

And I said to him beside me, "What place is this?"
And he said, "This is heaven."
And I said, "Where is it?"
And he answered, "On earth."
And I said, "When shall these things be?"
And he answered, "IN THE FUTURE."

However, her dreams make clear that a great struggle is required to reach this future state of humanity.⁷⁹ Indeed, the Hegelian idea of struggle took a new form from the 1870s onwards; one which was not detached from the Romantic Movement and had deep roots

⁷⁶ William Winwood Read, *The Martyrdom of Man* (1872; repr., London: Watts & Co, 1933), 447.

⁷⁷ C.F.G. Masterman, *The Condition of England* (London: Methuen, 1909), 303.

⁷⁸ Derek Jarrett, *The Sleep of Reason* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1988), 143.

⁷⁹ Olive Schreiner, 'Three Dreams in a Desert' in *The Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 42 (1887), 198-203.

in Platonism. Dominant in intellectual hopes towards the end of the century was the idea of a new renaissance, which they were struggling to reach.

Contributions to *The Fortnightly Review* prophesied about a new and nobler kind of religion, which would result from such a renaissance. In 'Our Noble Selves' the anonymous author looked to a future of increased richness and nobility, explaining,

the narrow thoughts, the petty sympathies, the anthropocentric creeds, the anthropomorphic gods that once sufficed us will no longer satisfy the yearnings of our enlarged natures. New beliefs and new impulses gather strength and head within us...all the world over we find today an awakening of the mind of man such as never perhaps was seen.⁸⁰

Richard Jefferies, in his article 'Nature and Books,' placed central importance on the mind of man in the task of humanity, which is to strive to find the alchemy of nature. He wrote,

By the mind, without instruments, the Greeks anticipated almost all our thought; by-and-by, having raised ourselves up upon these huge mounds of fact we shall begin to see still greater things; to do so we must look not at the mound under foot but at the starry horizon.⁸¹

Symonds in 'The Progress of Thought in Our Time' also placed emphasis on the ancient past in his prophecy. He blamed the Christian forefathers for an artificial separation of man from Nature and saw the spirituality which had sprung up in England during his lifetime as the engine for the emancipation of humanity and the individual. He argued,

We must return with fuller knowledge to something like the earlier, more instinctive faith about the world, whereof ourselves, body and spirit, are part. And nothing seems more evident than that we are being led back to this point.⁸²

Perhaps here then, we should leave and turn our attention to attitudes towards the ancient world; the true loci of paganism. As we have seen, intellectuals drew on the nineteenth century belief in progress and added the romanticist belief in the perfectibility of man. They mixed disillusion with the modern world with optimism for the new. Central to such hopes was a belief in the rise of man, who through supreme understanding and struggle would take the world to new and unimagined heights. Let us

⁸⁰ 'Our Noble Selves' (Anonymous) in *The Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 41 (1887), 211-24.

⁸¹ Richard Jefferies, 'Nature and Books' in *The Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 41 (1887), 646-56.

⁸² Symonds, 'Progress of Thought', 893.

now examine the ways in which the ancient world was perceived, moulded, and intertwined with these ideas.

CHAPTER 2: THE VICTORIANS AND THE ANCIENT WORLD

In 1859 Lord Acton commented that two great principles run through English society, the spell of the Middle Ages and the spell of the ancient world.¹ Lord Acton's comment at once highlights the prominence of the ancient world in Victorian England. This manifested itself in the attraction to the ancient civilisations of Greece, Rome and Egypt, with ancient Greece existing as the most magnetic of the three. Indeed, at the close of the eighteenth century British scholars shifted their field of interest from ancient Rome to ancient Greece. Several historians have attempted to account for this shift. W.H. Auden addressed the issue in 1948, arguing that the rise of Greece in the nineteenth century was a nationalist development:

The historical discontinuity between Greek culture and our own, the disappearance for so many centuries of any direct influence, made it all easier, when it was rediscovered, for each nation to fashion a classical Greece in its own image. There is a German Greece, a French Greece, and English Greece...all quite different.²

More recently, Frank M. Turner has restated and augmented Auden's argument. Through an examination of the writing of political history, the evaluation of epic poetry, and the appreciation of Roman and Greek philosophy, Turner has argued that factors of direct perception of relevance, the problematic character of documents, and the distinction of scholars engaged in classical studies all shifted the balance of interest in favour of Greece.³

The classics had long been entrenched in modern educated society. In the nineteenth century they were imbued with the highest value in Universities and were used as a mark of social status and a cultural reference for discussion and debate. Travel to the Mediterranean was similarly seen as imperative for the cultured and civilised modern man. The influence of ancient Greece reached to the edges of popular culture. Kingsley explained in *The Heroes* (1856),

¹ Cited in Herbert Butterfield, *Man on His Past: The Study of the History of Historical Scholarship* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), 212.

² W.H. Auden, ed. *The Portable Greek Reader* (New York: Viking Press, 1948), 2.

³ Frank M. Turner, 'Why the Greeks and not the Romans?' in *Rediscovering Hellenism*, ed. G.W. Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 61-81.

You can hardly find a well-written book which has not in it Greek names, and words...; you cannot walk through a great town without passing Greek buildings; you cannot go into a well-furnished room without seeing Greek statues and ornaments, even Greek patterns of furniture and paper...⁴

Ancient Greece was all-pervasive, but moreover, as Auden has asserted, ancient Greece could be perceived in different ways: as a land of reason, emotional control and freedom from superstition, or, as a land of gaiety, beauty and freedom of the senses. Fundamentally, Auden argued that these images of Greece were 'emotional tie[s]...formed in childhood and strengthened by years of study and affection' to the effect that they were stronger than any learned knowledge.⁵ Herein, lies a key to understanding the Victorians and the ancient world; the Victorians did not approach the ancient Greeks passively but rather, actively, with heart and soul. It is in some of the more agnostic hearts that such attachments could lead to paganism.

While Auden is correct in arguing that modern nations used ancient Greece in different ways, it must be asserted that Victorian attitudes towards ancient Greece originated in the influence of the German idealists, such as Wincklemann, Goethe, Schiller, and Schlegel. They froze the Greeks in the image of noble simplicity and calm grandeur; an approach which lacked historicity. Greece was spoken of with heavy romantic overtones and imbued with glamour and charm. Thus, in England, as Richard Jenkyns has described, Hellas became 'a sort of heavenly city, a shimmering fantasy on the far horizon'.⁶ For example, in 'Ode to Liberty' (1820), Shelley wrote that Athens was 'a city such as vision Builds from the purple crags and silver towers/ Of battlemented cloud'.⁷ Similarly, the Greeks themselves were viewed as glorious beings requiring reverential attitudes. Jenkyns argues that through this gloss, enquiry into ancient Greece ceased to be a living force and instead, Hellenism became 'a peg to hang one's preoccupations upon'.⁸

One key notion in this was the perception of ancient Greece as something modern and similar to Victorian England. This was based on the premise that some epochs in history could be more 'modern' than others, and that ancient Greece was one of these

⁴ Cited in Jenkyns, *Victorians and Ancient Greece*, 15.

⁵ Auden, ed. *Greek Reader*, 2.

⁶ Jenkyns, *Victorians and Ancient Greece*, 13.

⁷ Shelley, 'Ode to Liberty' in *Prometheus Unbound and Other Poems* (London: C. & J. Ollier, 1820).

⁸ Jenkyns, *Victorians and Ancient Greece*, 297.

more modern epochs. Victorians believed that although many centuries separated ancient Greece from Victorian England, the two civilisations had much in common, more so than civilisations closer to each other in time. The exaltation of ancient Greece in this way can be seen in many statements, spanning from Shelley's proclamation in *Hellas* (1822), 'we are all Greeks', through to Oscar Wilde's statement, 'whatever is modern we owe to the Greeks. Whatever is anachronism is due to medievalism'.⁹ The ancient Greeks were seen as distant contemporaries who had tackled the problems presenting themselves anew to the Victorians and so could be turned to as a source of moral and political wisdom. Thus ancient Greece acquired a sense of relevance. The Victorians sought, in part, to naturalise the achievement of the ancient Greeks in England, both nations being perceived as morally similar and highly civilised. Indeed, the veneration of Greece was not extended to her modern inhabitants, who were usually viewed as ignorant and backward and not the inheritors of any ancient wisdom. However, while the Victorians did see themselves as morally like the Greeks, they did not claim to be their cultural heirs to as great an extent as the Germans did.¹⁰

Although the Homeric age was widely cherished, in general, the greatest epoch of ancient Greece was seen to be fifth century Athens. It was perceived as one of the most highly developed and modern periods in human civilisation. Greek literature and poetry from this period were exalted as the immortal relics of the intellectual maturity of ancient Greek man. In his 1857 lecture, 'On the Modern Element in Literature', Matthew Arnold expressed the enduring interest of Greek works, writing that 'the literature of Greece is, even for modern times, a mighty agent of intellectual deliverance; even for modern times, therefore, an object of indestructible interest'.¹¹ In addition, this highlights the Victorian perception that the past carried with it implications for the present. Literature was seen in the humanist sense, as ethical rather than aesthetic. Thus, Victorians believed that what was thought and written about Greece would profoundly affect contemporary political, religious, philosophical and moral discourse. This rendered the impulse behind most

⁹ Shelley, *Hellas* (London: C. & J. Ollier, 1822); Oscar Wilde, 'The Critic as Artist' in *Intentions* (London: James R. Osgood McIlvaine and Co, 1891).

¹⁰ Jenkyns, *Dignity and Decadence*, 19.

¹¹ Reprinted in Matthew Arnold, *Selected Prose*, ed. P.J. Keating (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), 58.

engaged discussion of ancient Greek civilisation conservative in character, with the ancients used as moral guides.

Clinging to the classics out of conservatism, the version of ancient Greece depicted was severely sanitised. Aspects that may have disturbed Victorian values were mostly ignored, suppressed, or domesticated. Greece was revered in terms of her politics, being seen as a prototype for modern conservatism that supported a unified state and traditional political elites. The rise of liberalism made the example of Greece increasingly relevant. For example, George Grote, in his seminal work, *A History of Greece* (1846), equated the Athenian Assembly with Parliament, Pericles with the Prime Minister, and Cleon with some radical Opposition spokesman.¹² Only selected Greek authors were used, such as Homer, Socrates, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Aristophanes, and they were drawn upon for their perceived relevance. Greek art, sculpture, and architecture were also all set upon pedestals. They came to represent a specific aesthetic ideal in contrast to the Gothic, which, as F.T. Palgrave expressed in *The Academy* 1870, is 'unfantastic; it is moderate; it is sane; it rejects what goes no further than mere suggestion; it hates the vogue and the introspective'.¹³ This ideal was stressed as exemplar of Anglican virtues, an equation which implicitly also attacked Catholicism.

The ancient Greeks themselves were seen as an aesthetic people, and their achievements were ascribed to the nobility, dignity and grace of the Greek mind. Such attributes can be seen particularly in Victorian attitudes to Greek sculpture. Jenkyns discusses this in detail, asserting that the nakedness of the sculptures was perceived not as a sign of primitivism but of civilisation. Rather than attribute praise to the sculptures for their realism, it was the idealism of Greek art which was seen to constitute its best virtue. The bodies were believed to exude an innocent concern with form, which removed them from the taint of sin. The whiteness of the sculptures was linked to religious impulses of eternity and stillness, as well as representing a symbol of intellectual clarity.¹⁴ Through the images derived from sculpture the Greeks were seen as a beautiful, muscular race and possessors of genius. Their strong and healthy form was perceived to contrast with the often decrepit state of the body in modern times. Thus ancient Greece as an aesthetic

¹² Cited in Turner, *Greek Heritage*, 213-14.

¹³ Cited in *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁴ Jenkyns, *Victorians and Ancient Greece*, 133-54.

ideal was used to extol vitality, virility, and heroic measures of strength; attributes which were highly prized in certain quarters of Victorian England, as we have seen in Chapter 1.¹⁵ The Greeks were imbued almost with an aura of sanctity, but as an aesthetic ideal they were seen in a dream-state rather than as real people. Jenkyns argues that the Victorians' relations with the ancient Greeks were anything other than ordinary and so they wanted to avoid dealing with them in everyday situations.¹⁶ This is perhaps one of the reasons why Victorian art tended to focus on Greek gods and goddesses rather than ordinary men and women. Frederick Leighton's 'The Bath of Psyche' (1890), inspired by a statue he saw while at Naples, is typical of the images of beautiful Greek deities removed from the specifics of place.

Images of a sane ancient Greece were appealing to conservatives at a time of great upheaval; however, they also had the consequence of idealising ancient Greece. It could remain a conservative impulse as long as the ideal of Greek order and ethics was exalted as an example from which modern society could take good heed, but it contained the danger that in more radical hands the ideal could be used to magnify the weaknesses of Victorian society and offer an alternative model and image for society. Within this conflict was, not least, the issue of religion. Ancient Greece stood as the supreme example of a society that had reached the highest degree of civilisation, but crucially, it had not been Christian. Matthew Arnold sought to reconcile the successes of ancient Greece with the revelations of Christian and Hebraic religion, in his seminal essay *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). This was to set the tone for humanistic discussion of Greek virtues for the next fifty years.

Arnold saw culture as the study in perfection and an indispensable aid to reach the ideal state. He attributed this as peculiarly the ideal and achievement of the Greeks. He argued that 'the significance of the Greeks was their having been inspired with the central and happy idea of the essential character of human perception; sweetness and light' and believed that the serenity of the Greeks and of Greek art came from them having harmonised ideas.¹⁷ He presented the sanity of Greece as a relief from contemporary

¹⁵ Chapter 1, 19-20.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 154; Richard Jenkyns, 'Late Antiquity in English Novels of the Nineteenth Century' in *Arion*, Vol. 3 (1995/ 1996), 141-64, 142-3.

¹⁷ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 208-13.

intellectual confusion, arguing that the modern world needed the salvation of harmony of ideas. Arnold's assertion of the rationalist, calm character of the Greeks allowed him to embrace a moral spirit more flexible than Christianity without seeming to encounter moral license. Turner highlights that Max Muller's 'solar theory' of Greek myths, whereby the meaning of myths were seen to be originally mere descriptions of the sun's flight across the sky, helped those like Arnold avoid the moral problems of emulating the Greeks, since it exonerated them from having followed an irrational and immoral religion.¹⁸

Through his view of Greek culture, Arnold perceived that there was no necessary conflict between Hellenism and Hebraism. For him, they were intertwined and society fundamentally needed both. He defined Hebraism as the 'strictness of conscience' which aims at conduct and obedience, and Hellenism as 'spontaneity of consciousness' which aims to see things as they really are. However, he believed that both had the same final aim of man's perfection and salvation, since both contain a desire for the reason and will of God and hope that men might be partakers in the divine nature. Arnold assigned no superior status to Hebraism, seeing it as only one side of the contribution to the development of man. He argued that modern man should use Hellenism to perceive the 'actual instincts and forces which rule our life, seeing them as they really are, connecting them with other instincts and force, and enlarging our whole view and rule of life'.¹⁹ Arnold's work resulted in turning Christianity into a man-centred system of morality, and his essay stands as a kind of militant call to secular living. In his hands, this version of morality was palatable to Evangelical Christianity, which itself placed a great deal of emphasis on secular life. However, his elevation of Greece and application of its merits to modern society could, in other more radical hands, severely undermine the Christian religion and lead to the presentation of Hellenism as sufficient in itself. In many ways, the exaltation of Greece by the more conservative was unintentionally supplying the more radical with the tools to dismantle the ever precarious Victorian cultural consensus.

If we examine the way in which other Victorians dealt with ancient Greek religion, we can again see that they were somewhat playing with fire. Liberal Anglicans

¹⁸ Turner, *Greek Heritage*, 104-15.

¹⁹ Reprinted in Arnold, *Selected Prose*, 286.

employed Greek philosophy as a foil against Victorian scientific naturalism and utilitarianism and so ancient Greece was used as a surrogate for Christianity. Turner comments that the alliance between Greek philosophy, German idealism and Liberal Anglicanism was so effective that for over a century it prevented utilitarianism and rationalism from significantly intruding upon any British University, except the birthplace of utilitarianism, University College London.²⁰ Part of the way in which this alliance was manifest was in the intertwining of classical and religious studies. The Greek language was seen as important because it was needed to study the New Testament. Also, because the New Testament was written in Greek, it was argued that it must have been part of the divine plan to plant Christianity in favourable soil. Greek ideas came to be seen as essential in the creation of moral wisdom and in the revelation of God's nature. Ancient Greek religion was interpreted as an earlier stage of human perception of the divine that was, in certain respects, compatible with Christianity.

Clerical scholars assimilated Socrates into their own camp. Depending on one's predisposition, Socrates was seen as a liberal deist, a substitute Christ-figure, a mystic or a no-nonsense early Victorian Methodist. His moral theory was seen as noble and used to illustrate that God had not totally abandoned the pagan world. For example, in 1842 R.D. Hampden wrote that 'Socratic morality bore strongly the marks of the law written by the finger of God' and in the 1850s F.D. Maurice took this to its logical conclusion and argued that God had in some manner revealed his truth in all religions.²¹ Indeed, Broad Churchmen were particularly eager to find divine truth outside of the Hebraic tradition.

Homer was largely used as a secular history, which provided a complementary morality to Christianity. The Victorian most under the spell of Homer was Gladstone. He produced more work on Homer than any other in the nineteenth century.²² Indeed, he is reported to have said that this connection vied for importance only with solving the Irish Question.²³ In his study, Gladstone had a table for politics and a 'Homer-table', at which, one of his friends observed, 'he found coolness and refreshment when hot with

²⁰ Turner, 'Why the Greeks?', 76.

²¹ Cited in Turner, *Greek Heritage*, 271; 273.

²² Gladstone's most notable works on Homer are *Studies on Homer and the Homeric Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1858); *Homeric Syncretism: An Enquiry into the Time and Place of Homer* (London: MacMillan, 1876); *Homer* (London: MacMillan, 1878).

²³ Cited in Turner, *Greek Heritage*, 165.

polemics'.²⁴ Gladstone's deep admiration for Homer came from a conservative standpoint, but one which placed Homer not just in the secular sphere: he was attempting to prove a connection between a Hebrew and an Olympian revelation. Gladstone was consumed by the idea that God had revealed His plan prior to Abraham. He tried to prove the existence in Homer of a triple god-head, the presence of an Evil One, and the concept of a redeemer born of a woman. He argued that God had blessed the Greek race but in time chose the Hebrews, since by their very backwardness and insignificance the divine nature of their importance could be more clearly seen. While the Hebrews played their part, the Hellenes played theirs, as a secular counter-part to the Gospels and with the development of their language and philosophy permitted the diffusion of Christianity in the Mediterranean world.

Thus Gladstone championed revealed religion and the Christian propriety of secular callings, knowledge and progress. Indeed, part of his concern for this was probably due the psychological need of a deeply religious man to justify his own choice of a life in politics, rather than in the Established Church. The unintended consequence of this was to advance the cause of the Greeks and demote Christianity, making the natural achievement of the Greeks appear prescriptively adequate for temporal life. John Ruskin recognised the gravity of such tendencies, querying 'what do you expect your kids to be taught? Christian history or the histories of Pan and Silenus? Your present education, to all intents and purposes, denies Christ'.²⁵ Such divided loyalties are evident in Russell's account of Gladstone playing a game with a visitor to Hawarden in which each had to say on which day he would most like to live. Gladstone chose to spend a day in fifth-century ancient Athens, but when his visitor chose the day of the Pentecost, Gladstone apparently looked ashamed and changed his choice to 'a day with the Lord'.²⁶ Therefore, rather than the radical use of ancient Greece growing outside of mainstream society, radicals stood on the shoulders of the conservatives, drawing on the traditional application of ancient Greece to the modern day and the nineteenth century esteem with which the moral worth of Greek religion and culture was held.

²⁴ E.F. Benson, *As We Were* (1930; repr., London: Longmans, 1971), 107.

²⁵ Cited in Jenkyns, *Victorians and Ancient Greece*, 69.

²⁶ E. Russell, *That Reminds Me-* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1899), 123-4.

Much of the more radical handling of ancient Greece came straight out of the Romantic mould. The idealisation of ancient Greece by the early Romantic poets and artists pitted Greece as an alternative to modern society and, lamenting its disappearance, called for its return. Many of the Victorians we encounter in our examination of paganism in the last decades of the century were strong admirers of these early poets and dedicated many books and elegies in praise of them. The Romantic Movement's love affair with Greece was closely linked to its disgust with the industrialism of the modern world. Ancient Greece was used as an example of a non-industrial society, held up as anti-commercial and happy in the absence of tumultuous laissez-faire individualism. Thomas Love Peacock contrasted Greek qualities with the drab world of steam, improvement and utility of the modern world.²⁷ In a letter of 23-24th January 1819, Shelley wrote of his preference for the ancient Greeks' way of living close to nature. He argued that ancient Greece attained the highest plane of civilisation of any society before or since and lamented that Christianity led to the withdrawal of harmonizing possibilities of life:

O but for that series of wretched wars which terminated in Roman conquest of the world, but for the Christian religion which put a finishing stroke to the antient system; but for those changes which conducted Athens to its ruin, to what an eminence might not humanity have arrived?²⁸

Ancient Greece was where man lived close to nature and in bliss, free from rigid convention and external laws. For Shelley, this was the best form of life.

Ancient Greece was idealised for its stability and calm in contrast to the transitions occurring in the modern world. This is linked to the idea that ancient Greece existed in a natural state, rather than in the artificial reality of the modern world. In this natural state the Greek world was one of happiness, purity and innocence. John Keats wrote in 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' (1819) that it was a world,

For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love, more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoyed,
For ever panting and for ever young...²⁹

²⁷ Cited in Turner, *Greek Heritage*, 36.

²⁸ Cited in Timothy Webb, *English Romantic Hellenism 1700-1824* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), 230-4.

²⁹ Reprinted in *Romanticism: An Anthology*, 1060-2.

As this ideal and perfect state, ancient Greece could be used as a form of escapism. Into the Victorian period, this can be seen in paintings of ancient Greece by Frederick Leighton and Lawrence Alma-Tadema, which attempted not to reconstruct any specific time or place in the ancient world, but to depict a timeless, idealised fantasy world. Indeed, Jenkyns has commented of Leighton, 'for him classicism is not the recovery of a romantically distant past but an idea of form and spirit, permanent and timeless'.³⁰

The ideal of ancient Greek religion and culture was further bolstered by the notion that the Greeks, unlike the Romans, had not relinquished their paganism for Christianity. The paganism which Rome gave up was seen as a shallow and corrupt form of original paganism. Part of the appeal of original paganism was its images as something very early, when civilisation was in an infant, youthful and innocent state. Newman, Grote, J.S. Mill, and Walter Pater all represented the Greeks as childlike.³¹ This was often linked to a perception that Greek life was delightfully simple, in contrast to the complex modern modes. For example, in *Epipsychidion* (1821) Shelley described ancient Greeks as 'simple and spirited; innocent and bold' whose 'simple life wants little, and true taste/Hires not the pale drudge of Luxury to waste'. Resulting from this, ancient Greece was often seen as a time when man was closer to divinity than in the modern world. This indirectly served the Christian view that modern humans are more decayed from sin than their progenitors. However, since the Greeks were not Christians, to some extent, this also undermined Christianity.

A key motif employed in the use of ancient Greece as an alternative to modern society was the Greek god, Pan. Pan was a relatively minor god in ancient Greek times and not part of the Parthenon. However, in the nineteenth century Pan became a universal god and there was an astonishing resurgence of interest in him. Patricia Merivale introduces her work by arguing that 'a curious philological accident' made Pan 'not merely a god of Arcadia, but of the whole of nature'.³² So pervasive was his image, that Merivale describes he became a subject about which 'every minor poet thought that he

³⁰ Richard Jenkyns, 'Hellenism in Victorian Painting' in *Rediscovering Hellenism*, 90-115, 90.

³¹ Turner, *Greek Heritage*, 41.

³² Patricia Merivale, *Pan the Goat God – His Myth in Modern Times* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1969), vii.

could turn out a ditty'.³³ Pan was a god, half goat and half god. In the eighteenth century this dual character led to an image of an unimposing god, often ignorant, and presumptuously aiming for a sphere above his reach. However in the nineteenth century Pan became more an abstract concept and an all-infusing spirit of the landscape, with his dual nature being the cause of his reign in the natural world. Jenkyns argues that part of the appeal of Pan was also that he was 'not an Olympian god who had already been frozen by Goethe and Winckelmann into statuesque calm'.³⁴ Thus Pan could function as a vibrant and vital god and could exercise appeal beyond conservative impulses.

Part of the significance of Pan was his representation in ancient myth. In Emperor Tiberius' reign the crew and passengers of a ship near the isles of Paxi heard a loud supernatural cry that the great god Pan was dead. This was said to signal the opening of Christian era. The story at once juxtaposes Pan and the modern Christian era, as well as allowing Pan to represent paganism. Many poets in the nineteenth century wrote of the death of Pan and lamented the dull world left in his wake. One of the most famous examples appeared in 1844 by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. In 'The Dead Pan' she wrote about her sadness at the defeat of the old deities, ending

Have ye left the mountain places,
Oreads wild, for other tryst?
Shall we see no sudden faces
Strike a glory through the midst?
Not a sound the silence thrills,
On the everlasting hills.
Pan, Pan is dead.³⁵

Since Pan was seen as a pastoral god, blame was also placed on science and the Industrial Revolution for their destruction of the countryside.

The concept of the death of paganism is connected to the idea of living in a secondary age, which those in the Romantic tradition acutely felt. The Romantics often believed that the loss of gods and nymphs made the writing of poetry difficult because their absence impoverished the life of the mind. The German philosopher and critic,

³³ *Ibid.*, 181.

³⁴ Jenkyns, *Victorians and Ancient Greece*, 178.

³⁵ Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 'The Dead Pan' in *Poems* (London: Routledge, 1844); repr., in *The Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, ed. Karen Hill (Ware: Wordsworth, 1994), 303-6.

August Schlegel, delivered a series of lectures in Berlin between 1801 and 1804 and self-consciously defined Romanticism in sympathetic contrast to the poetry of the ancients.

The poetry of the ancients was the poetry of enjoyment, ours is that of desire; the former has its foundation in the scene which is present, while the latter hovers betwixt recollection and yearning...Among the moderns, feeling has become altogether more intense, imagination more ethereal, thought more contemplative.³⁶

Thus longing and nostalgia were key tenets of the Romantic Movement and, similarly, at the heart of the Romantic handling of ancient Greece. This set the mode of nineteenth century poetic representations of paganism and Pan. Towards the end of the century some radical thinkers employed this poetic sentiment to guide their thoughts and actions in the real world; not just a literary device, paganism was something they actively wanted to come to fruition.

One way in which hope was given for paganism, and the Pan motif further undermined modern society, was that, for some, Pan still lingered on in the countryside. The early Romantics of James Henry Leigh Hunt's circle came to praise Pan in an attempt to bring a dormant and hiding god forth to rule in a new pagan era. They proclaimed that he was 'alive again' and sometimes signed their letters 'in the name of Pan'.³⁷ Mid-Victorians perceived Pan's presence too; for example, in 'Lines Written in Kensington Gardens' (1852) Matthew Arnold describes how in this small oasis of pastoral retreat he found Pan: 'In the huge world, which roars hard by/ Be others happy if they can!/ But in my helpless cradle I/ Was breathed on by rural Pan.'³⁸ Robert Louis Stevenson, in 'Pan's Pipes' (1881), attacked modern civilisation and yet claimed that Pan of all the Olympian deities was alive and existed as pure romance itself.³⁹ Indeed, as the century progressed the conclusion that Pan was alive was the one most often reached. In representing the vanishing English countryside, Pan was the god most usually praised as an attempt to inaugurate a new paganism.

³⁶ August Schlegel, *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, trans. John Black, 2 vols. (London: 1815), Vol. 1, Lecture 1, 'Dramatic Literature'. Viewed at <<http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext04/8ldal10.txt>> May, 2006.

³⁷ Jenkyns, *Victorians and Ancient Greece*, 175-8.

³⁸ Matthew Arnold, 'Lines Written in Kensington Gardens' in *Empedocles on Etna, and Other Poems* (London: B. Fellowes, 1852).

³⁹ Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Pan's Pipes' in *Virginibus Puerisque and Other Poems* (London: Eveleigh Nash and Grayson, 1881).

However, as a universal god, it must also be noted that Pan was not always a benign god; he was also often animalistic and sexual. This allowed the Pan-motif to be employed as a weapon against traditional Victorian morality to emphasise the ancients' concern with the senses and sexuality. Plato was often associated with radical opinion in this vein, since although he posited the reality of an unseen realm of Forms, he was also a lover of the visible world. In this way, Plato transcended the ascetic heritage of Pythagoreans and contributed to philosophical redemption of senses, matter, and the body. He was also strongly associated with homosexual love and as the century progressed he was increasingly turned to as the voice for those radicals who sought to promote homosexuality, the love which was, of course, at this time, illegal.⁴⁰

The life of Plato in the Victorian world is particularly intriguing. Before the 1840s Plato was largely untaught and untranslated. As Love Peacock wrote in *Crotchet Castle*, he was traditionally seen to be 'a misleader of youth'.⁴¹ In the second half of the century Plato was presented with characteristic Victorian tyranny according to the specific bent of the writer. Liberal Anglicans described the divinely implanted ideas in Plato's philosophy and used him to uphold traditional Christian ethic, whereas utilitarians presented him as a radical Benthamite. Some saw Plato as a devout, but superstitious man who prayed to Pan, while others focused on his aristocratic tendencies and admiration for Sparta. By the end of the century, Plato came to have widespread influence on poetic sentiment and philosophy. Turner has argued that whereas initially the Victorians found Plato irrelevant for a practical-minded industrial nation, towards the end of the century Plato was esteemed precisely because he was transcendental.⁴² Thus, importantly, his rise in popularity was linked to the rise of spiritualist and idealist thought. As we shall see, Plato's aim to exalt man into a god came to be prominently used in radical circles.

Examination of attitudes towards ancient Greece reveals a Victorian perception of ancient Greece as something modern and similar to the Victorian age and as a romantic ideal of a distant time, perceived as a hazy, yet glorious, mirage. This second point is

⁴⁰ See Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1994); Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present Day* (London, 1977).

⁴¹ Thomas Love Peacock, *Crotchet Castle* (London: Hookham, 1831), 91.

⁴² Turner, *Greek Heritage*, 369-411.

particularly important in the understanding of the Victorian attitudes towards ancient Rome. Fiction about the ancient world exemplifies the way in which ancient Greece was viewed from afar. This is clearly argued in Jenkyns' assessment of four of the most important historical novels about the ancient world in the Victorian period: Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *Last Days of Pompeii* (1834), Charles Kingsley's *Hypatia* (1851-3), J.H. Newman's *Callista* (1855) and Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* (1885). Each book is set in a late period of antiquity under the Roman Empire, with emphasis placed on its lateness. Jenkyns asserts that from this Roman standpoint all look back to the great age of the ancient Greeks with a sense of 'belatedness', expressing a sense of belonging to a secondary age, haunted by the quality of what went before.⁴³ For example, in *Marius*, Pater wrote, 'the most wonderful, the unique, point, about the Greek genius...was the entire absence of imitation in its productions' and stressed that for his protagonists 'Hellas, in its earliest freshness, looked as distant...even then as it does from ourselves'.⁴⁴ This way of viewing ancient Greece and Rome was a profound expression of the situation in which the Victorians found themselves. The Victorians felt they were living in the shadow of the Greeks, believing they could not achieve their heights of epic poetry or find true spontaneity and originality.

Turner has also contributed an essay on the same historical novels. He emphasises the placing of Victorian religious controversies in periods of late antiquity, as a 'battle over the territory of the first five centuries'.⁴⁵ This can be clearly seen in Kingsley's *Hypatia* which takes the historical event of a female Alexandrian pagan philosopher murdered by Christians, and uses it to attack Roman Catholic celibacy and fanaticism, by having the pagan heroine presented in a positive light and converting to a true and healthy version of Christianity just before she dies, brutally murdered by fanatic monks. In this way, Kingsley presented one version of Christianity (analogous to his own Protestant faith) as the inheritor of a good version of paganism, while the other version, Catholicism, is presented as sickly, narrow-minded and divorced from the wisdom of pagan philosophies. The recently converted Roman Catholic, Newman, responded to the

⁴³ Jenkyns, 'Late Antiquity in English Novels', *passim*.

⁴⁴ Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean: His Sensations and Ideas*, 2 vols. (London: MacMillan, 1885; repr., 1909), I. 99.

⁴⁵ Frank M. Turner, 'Christians and Pagans in Victorian Novels' in *Roman Presences*, 173-87, 183.

attack, by representing Catholicism as the natural development of good and pure paganism. His heroine, Callista, is a 'good' pagan who converts to early, Catholic, Christianity and dies a Christian martyr at the hands of an 'evil' version of paganism. Thus the Roman Empire in which the fictional characters find themselves was a version of the nineteenth century. Moreover, the novels were intent on reconciling one form of paganism with their own Christian faiths.

One reason that this could be done at all was what Jenkyns has described as a belief in 'the unchanging doctrine of the human heart', meaning that the ancients were seen as bearing the same basic psychology as the Victorians.⁴⁶ Bulwer-Lytton expressed this belief in his novel: 'men, nations, customs perish: the affections are immortal! – they are the sympathies which write the ceaseless generations'.⁴⁷ While this was true for both the Greeks and the Romans, Rome often felt much closer to Victorian England. Rome, unlike Athens, could not represent a polar opposite to modern England; by contrast she was seen as the base of European civilisation. Indeed, the influence of ancient Rome in England is a history with great longevity. But for Rome, Christianity may not have spread and so the heritage of Rome was often closely linked to the Christian faith. The experience of Rome was not impossibly remote for Victorians due to the availability of travel to Italy and the direct contact with Roman culture through Roman Britain. There was also a profound accumulation of knowledge about ancient Rome gathered throughout the century, in large part due to the founding in 1865 of the British Archaeological Society of Rome. Such knowledge led, for example, to paintings of Rome not so much of ruins, but of recreations of Roman life with characters and researched detail. This also takes us back to Jenkyns' argument cited earlier, that the Victorians would not want to depict the ancient Greeks in everyday situations because they viewed them with such reverence and glamour. The same was not felt for Rome and so a sense of affinity with ancient Rome was sustained and stimulated.

In education, Latin held pride of place, with a much more extended readership than ancient Greek. Roman poetry was copiously studied and influenced the style of much Victorian poetry. Like the lot dealt to the ancient Greeks, different schools of

⁴⁶ Jenkyns, 'Late Antiquity in English Novels', 143.

⁴⁷ Edward Bulwer Lytton, *Last Days of Pompeii* (London: Richard Bentley, 1834; repr., London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), 164-5.

thought fought to claim the ancient Romans as their own. Norman Vance has produced a detailed analysis of key Roman writers and explained their Victorian images. For example, he highlights that Lucretius was seen as a modern poet and the champion of scientific rationalism, but was also popular among the Romantics for his delight in nature; Virgil was exalted, often seen as secondary only to Homer, and also close to romantic sensibilities; Ovid was seen as degenerate with a reputation for frivolity and impudence; and Horace was portrayed as the gentleman's poet who reflected civilised life and patriotism.⁴⁸ Thus Roman poets could share similar characteristics with those of ancient Greece, exercising influence on the same romantic poets in their tide of primitivism. For example, Swinburne used Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as a romantic commentary on a world where humanity can be at one with nature.⁴⁹ Roman names for the pagan gods were sometimes used interchangeably with the Greek names and the ancient Italian and Greek countryside could represent the same natural, but lost, civilisation. In 1842 Thomas Babington Macaulay published what was to be his extremely popular *Lays of Ancient Rome*. This contributed to such idealisation, presenting Rome as an ideal vision and a possible model for the future to make sense of the chaotic present.

Nevertheless, the use of ancient Rome was most prominent in the spheres of politics and empire. This drew on the eighteenth century legacy in which commentary on the Roman Republic was overwhelmingly secular and used as a source of political wisdom. Rome was presented as a moral tradition: exemplary, coherent, and masculine. For example, Charles Merivale's influential works published 1850-1864, praised Julius Caesar for his government according to facts and knowledge.⁵⁰ Britain was traditionally likened to Rome for her empire, which was part of the Victorian process of self-identification. On 25th June, 1850, Lord Palmerston defended his aggressive stance in the Don Pacifico affair declaring,

As the Roman, in days of old, held himself free from indignity when he could say *Civis Romanus Sum*, so also a British subject in whatever land he may be, shall feel confident that

⁴⁸ Vance, *Victorians and Ancient Rome*, 83-198.

⁴⁹ Cited in *Ibid.*, 164.

⁵⁰ Turner: *Contesting Cultural Authority*, 249-53.

the watchful eye and the strong arm of England will protect him against injustice and wrong.⁵¹

The Roman general, Pompey, became a celebrity in the 1860s for his military successes and was held up as an honorary Briton.⁵² Roman heroic individualism appeared to justify the individualism of Victorian liberals. Evelyn Baring, Lord Cromer, in his book *Ancient and Modern Imperialism* (1910) argued that all comparisons must be with Rome since the Imperial idea was foreign to the Greek mind. Gilbert Murray similarly commented, 'at home England is Greek, in the Empire she is Roman'.⁵³

Vance's book centres round his perception that ancient Rome and Victorian England functioned as two mutually supporting and mutually destabilising entities.⁵⁴ As the nineteenth century progressed and the general mood of economic and imperial buoyancy subsided, there was increasing reluctance to be associated with ancient Rome. The power and strength of imperial Rome came to be seen as haunted by inevitable decline. Successive editions of Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* kept in mind the negative image of Rome's decay into anarchy, corruption and military defeat. The rhetoric of empire, when dealing with both British and Roman, came to talk in terms of a dark splendour rather than triumphant enthusiasm. The earlier royal titles act that had made the Queen 'Empress of India' now seemed to jar, since it likened Britain to Rome. With this emphasis on the immorality of the Romans, the moral basis of British prosperity was increasingly questioned. Indeed, most Victorians tended to approve of the demise of Rome, seeing it as a warning against political consideration without resort to religion.⁵⁵ Thus they tried to mark the contrast between the corruption of Roman Imperial power and the enlightened rule of the modern British Empire. For example, in an article published in *The Contemporary Review* in 1895, Thomas Hodgkin argued that Rome had fallen due to her lack of a monarchy, dependence on slavery, poor lot to farmers,

⁵¹ *British Prime Ministers of the Nineteenth Century: Policies and Speeches*, ed. Joseph Hendershot Park (New York: New York University Press, 1916), 164-5.

⁵² Vance, *Victorians and Ancient Rome*, 242.

⁵³ Cited in Jenkyns, *Victorians and Ancient Greece*, 333; 337.

⁵⁴ Vance, *Victorians and Ancient Rome*.

⁵⁵ Turner, *Contesting Cultural Authority*, 244-55.

financial oppression of the middle classes, and the influx of the Barbarians. Fortunately, Hodgkin argued, Britain did not suffer from these ills and her empire shall not fall.⁵⁶

Emphasis on the immorality of ancient Rome by such conservatives concerned to preserve the glory of British imperialism, contributed to a destruction of the previously held notion that ancient Romans could provide a model for behaviour in the modern world. The tradition of painting Romans performing heroic deeds virtually disappeared. Fascination with Rome instead tended to become a morbid fascination with her luxury, excess, eroticism, and corruption. Alma-Tadema portrayed the moral wickedness of the Roman Empire in his painting, 'The Roses of Heliogabalus' (1888). The painting depicts the asphyxiation of guests by thousands of petals as the Emperor and his consorts look on from their banqueting table. Elizabeth Prettejohn comments that the impact of the painting is through the 'bizarre discrepancy between the visual luxuriance of the pink rose-petals and the moral anarchy of the subject matter'.⁵⁷ The life and deeds of Emperor Nero were emphasised and he, who at the best of times never had a good name, became a virtual anti-Christ. This increasingly swayed the balance in the uneasily shifting images of Rome as either the persecutor or the nurturer of early Christianity, in favour of the former. For example, J.W. Waterhouse's 'Saint Eulalia' (1885) depicts the martyred young girl, who was killed for refusing to worship pagan gods, contrasting her innocence and vulnerability with Roman brutality.

The Archdeacon and Canon of Westminster, F.W. Farrar, expressed his hatred of the early Roman Empire in his 1898 novel *Darkness and Dawn or, scenes in the days of Nero*. The book tells the tale of Christian perseverance in the face of Roman persecution and presents all the major figures of Nero's court as evil to the core. Farrar argued that through the killing of Christians, 'Paganism was to display herself, naked and not ashamed, a harlot holding in her hand the brimming goblet of her wickedness, drunken with the blood of the beloved God.'⁵⁸ For Farrar, it was from the blood and ashes of martyrs that a pure faith arose almost instantaneously. There was no progression from the

⁵⁶ Thomas Hodgkin, 'The Fall of the Roman Empire and Its Lessons For Us' in *The Contemporary Review* Vol. 73 (1898: Jan/ June), 51-70.

⁵⁷ Elizabeth Prettejohn, 'Recreating Rome in Victorian Painting: From History to Genre' in *Imagining Rome: British Artists and Rome in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Michael Liversidge and Catherine Edwards (London: Merrell Holberton, 1996), 54-68, 63.

⁵⁸ F.W. Farrar, *Darkness and Dawn; Or, scenes in the days of Nero* (London: Longmans and Co, 1891), 482

religion of ancient civilisation but a sudden moment of Christian triumph. As we have seen, Kingsley's novel offered a different version of events, allowing room for a 'good' version of paganism, but similarly, and crucially, he also severed the link between the paganism of ancient Rome and Christianity. In the Preface to the novel, Kingsley, with his truck of masculinity and health, argued that the Christian world would never have attained its 'lofty future...without some infusion of new and healthier blood into the veins of a world drained and tainted by the influence of Rome'.⁵⁹ This blood was found in the invasion of the Goths, explicitly explained by Kingsley, as the heirs of the true spirit of paganism and the true religion of Protestantism. This was, of course, also an attempt to naturalise the Greek spirit in England.

The revolt at the end of the century against conventional aesthetics and morality continued in the vein of portraying the Romans as evil and corrupt. However, in their determined rebellion against society they delighted in the physical and moral degeneracy associated with decline. Richard Le Gallienne described this state of mind in 'A ballad of London': 'From the corruption of their woe/ Springs this bright flower that charms us so'.⁶⁰ Le Gallienne and others came to be known as the 'decadents'; a disparate group of writer and artists whom we shall examine in detail in Chapter 4. Contesting the traditional legacy of Rome, the decadents used ancient Rome as a stimulant and inspiration for much of their writings and paintings against society. They held Rome up as a prime example of the degradation and decadence that they enjoyed and the rest of society deplored. The vocal prominence of the decadents at the end of the century propelled the image of a wicked Rome increasingly to the fore. Thus paganism, in this form, became associated with radicals in defiant opposition to society and something threatening to the life-blood of the moral nation. None the less, through the decadents, paganism increasingly also became a feeling and a disposition recaptured and experienced anew.

⁵⁹ Charles Kingsley, *Hypatia; Or, Old Foes with a New Face* originally published in *Fraser's Magazine* (1851-3; repr., London: MacMillan, 1888), x.

⁶⁰ Richard Le Gallienne, 'A Ballad of London' in *English Poems* (London: Elkin Matthews and John Lane, 1892).

Next let us examine Victorian attitudes towards ancient Egypt. A fascination with ancient Egypt is a durable feature of Western thought. Unlike ancient Greece and Rome, ancient Egypt was not taught in schools and detailed knowledge of ancient Egyptian civilisation tended to remain the preserve of the specialist. Egypt is, however, in the Bible. Most importantly, Moses is said to be learned in 'all the wisdom of Egypt' and Egypt occupies a key role in the Exodus stories. The Victorians would no doubt have been highly familiar with these stories. In addition, most Victorians would have known easily recognisable Egyptian images: the pyramids, the Nile, the obelisks, and the peculiar Egyptian script. The more educated would have some knowledge of ancient Egypt through their study of the classics. The classical world held Egypt in awe and frequently expressed a sense of amazement at the culture and wisdom of pharonic Egypt. This can be most prominently seen in the writings of Herodotus. He wrote that ancient Egypt contained 'more wonderful things and astonishing works than all other lands' and praised the ancient Egyptians for being a most religious people.⁶¹ Pythagoras and Plato were seen to derive much of their thought from Egyptian wisdom, as expressed in classical texts which told of their travels to this exotic land to gain initiation and revelation.

Nevertheless, ancient Egypt came to the nineteenth century shrouded in mystery. Apart from the visual impact of her monuments, little was known about Egyptian culture, religion, and civilisation. No one had been able to decipher her hieroglyph script since the fifth-century CE. The library at Alexandria, which reportedly had contained nearly a million works, had burned down in 47 BCE taking with it an immense amount of knowledge about ancient Egypt. The mystery surrounding ancient Egypt emphasised its appearance as very old and distant. Ancient Egypt was famed as the inventor of the written word, science, and civilisation itself, but little was known of these events. Writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans emphasise the oldness of Egypt even in their time and they often seem to only have a hazy knowledge of ancient Egypt. Plato, for example, mentions the so-called 'Lamentations of Isis' as being of considerable antiquity in his own day.⁶² Thus the academic James Stevens Curl concludes, 'Egypt entered into

⁶¹ Herodotus II, 35.

⁶² Plato, *Laws* in *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. and ed. Benjamin Jowett (Oxford: Clarendon, 1892).

the European mind as an inaccessible land, where ancient esoteric knowledge once could be tapped, and where legend and Biblical stories mingled in a heady brew. It was an enticing subject for speculation, mythology and scholarship'.⁶³

Napoleon Bonaparte's expedition and short lived conquest of Egypt 1797-1801 brought Egypt into the geopolitical sphere of modern Europe and made it more accessible. British expeditions and periodic conquest of Egypt in the nineteenth century continued this trend, as did the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Tourists began to visit Egypt and in the second half of the nineteenth century Egypt was included in the Grand Tour. Tourist guidebooks and travel literature were produced, such as Harriet Martineau's *Eastern Life Past and Present* (1848), and the guidebook for use on a Nile cruise published in 1897 by the prominent Egyptologist, A. E. Wallis Budge.⁶⁴ Perhaps the most important discovery of the century was of the Rosetta Stone. The Stone arrived in England in 1802 and caused much excitement since it contained the same piece of writing in three scripts: hieroglyph, demotic, and ancient Greek. After the efforts of many of the best minds in Britain and France, in 1822 Jean-Francois Champollion successfully deciphered the hieroglyphics. This opened a gateway to a new world of discovery and knowledge about ancient Egypt. Budge proclaimed that through the Rosetta Stone and discoveries of other papyri throughout the century, the modern world now had 'access to "all the wisdom of the Egyptians" in which Moses was learned, and we can now perceive the greatness of the administrative and financial ability of Joseph, the Viceroy of Pharaoh. And the historical foundation of the Exodus stories'.⁶⁵

Throughout the century Britain collected thousands of Egyptian artefacts, large and small, and came to adorn its towns and cities with them. The expeditions and conquests of Egypt by modern Western powers imbued Egypt with the significance of imperialism. Western powers used Egyptian monuments as symbols for their own imperial power to the extent that it has been commented that the 'acquisition of Egyptian artefacts became one of the defining marks of the emergent nationalisms of the

⁶³ James Stevens Curl, *Egyptomania: The Egyptian Revival: A Recurring Theme in the History of Taste* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 9.

⁶⁴ See John Barrell, 'Death on the Nile: Fantasy and Literature of Tourism 1840-1860' in *Essays in Criticism*, Vol. 41 (April, 1991), 97-114.

⁶⁵ E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Rosetta Stone* (London: Kegan Paul, 1904; repr., New York: Dover Publications, 1989), 23.

nineteenth century'.⁶⁶ A reporter for the *New York Herald* wrote in 1881, 'it would be absurd for the people of any great city to hope to be happy without an Egyptian obelisk'.⁶⁷ However, this was not a new invention by modern powers; Imperial Rome had furnished its cities with Egyptian artefacts too. Thus Victorian Britain was copying the ancient Romans in its handling of ancient Egypt, drawing on the grandeur of ancient Egypt and trying the claim some of it for her own. It should be noted here too that although it was the nineteenth century that witnessed the real opening up of Egypt, since the seventeenth century explorers and scientists visited Egypt to investigate its great monuments. Their reports, such as John Greaves's celebrated *Pyramidographia* (1646), focused on the measurements of the Pyramids, also often attempting to set their huge size and height in the context of familiar English buildings such as St. Paul's cathedral. This early Egyptology emphasises the long standing preoccupation with the grandeur of ancient Egypt in the Western imagination, and so illuminates the resulting feeling of triumph when some of the smaller, though still large, monuments were successfully brought to modern cities.

In 1806, Robert Southey wrote

Everything must now be Egyptian: the ladies wear crocodile ornaments, and you sit upon a sphinx in a room hung round with mummies, and with the long black lean-armed long-nosed hieroglyphical men, who are enough to make the children afraid to go to bed.⁶⁸

This was not merely jocular: ancient Egypt was fast becoming a fashion trend and Egyptianising tendencies can be seen throughout the century. In 1811 William Bullock began building the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly which was based on the design of the temple at Denderah. By the mid-century, sphinxes had become popular statuary in wealthy Londoners' gardens, and pyramids could sometimes be found as funeral monuments for the wealthy. In 1854 at the Crystal Palace in its new location of Sydenham, pride of place went to the Egyptian Court designed by Owen Jones and Joseph Bonomi. This was essentially a mock up of the Colossi at Abu-Simbel, and

⁶⁶ Sally MacDonald and Michael Rice, 'Tea with a Mummy: The Consumer's View of Egypt's Immemorial Appeal' in *Consuming Ancient Egypt*, eds. Sally MacDonald and Michael Rice (London: UCL, 2003), 1-22, 3.

⁶⁷ Cited in Fekri Hassan, 'Imperialist Appropriations of Egyptian Obelisks' in *Views of Ancient Egypt Since Napoleon Bonaparte*, ed. David Jeffreys (London: UCL, 2003), 19-68, 64.

⁶⁸ Cited in Alex Werner 'Egypt in London' in *Imhotep Today: Egyptianizing Architecture*, eds. Jean-Marcel Humbert and Clifford Price (London: UCL, 2003), 75-100, 75.

exhibited Egyptian columns, deities and hieroglyphs.⁶⁹ Overall, the effect was one of power, kingship and the gigantic. Ancient Egypt appeared alien but grand. The exhibition brought Egyptian style before a wide public and set the tone for many attitudes towards Egypt for the rest of the century.

Perceptions of ancient Egypt were also linked to a longing for a more perfect society and state of being. Jean-Marcel Humbert and Clifford Price have argued, 'Egyptianising architecture is the architecture of dreams, of imagination, of the exotic, of a yearning for another time, another place'.⁷⁰ Indeed, ancient Egypt could provide an image of an alternative and better society. As knowledge of ancient Egyptian life increased, scholarship focused more on the national character of the people. Flinders Petrie examined Egyptian art, finding in it principles of durability, strength and dignity, which, he argued, could not be found in as great an extent in any other society. He asserted that Egyptian art was the true expression of the character of a nation, which lived in perfect harmony with the nature of the country.⁷¹ For him the ancient Egyptian was a 'strong-minded man, well-balanced, firm but kind, enjoying all rightful pleasures, and not denying himself a fair share of enjoyments or relaxation'.⁷² Here the Egyptians are not so alien; they are seen as ideal Victorians.

Similarities between Victorian England and ancient Egypt were also highlighted in terms of religion. The Egyptians were seen as exemplary for their strong religiosity and high morality arising from their beliefs. Furthermore, Egypt was often depicted as the origin and precursor of Christianity and many Egyptologists saw their work as a missionary endeavour. A.H. Sayce argued that the doctrine of emanation, the trinity, and the absolute-thought underlying all things, go back to the philosophy of ancient Egypt and of which Christianity was the fulfilment.⁷³ Budge, Petrie, and Gaston Maspero all placed emphasis on the Egyptian belief in one almighty and eternal God (Ra). Gardner Wilkinson introduced his book, *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* (1836),

⁶⁹ See Curl, *Egyptomania*, 93-7.

⁷⁰ Jean-Marcel Humbert and Clifford Price 'Architecture between Dream and Meaning' in *Imhotep Today*, 1-23, 23.

⁷¹ W.M. Flinders Petrie, *Arts and Crafts of Ancient Egypt* (London: T.N. Foulis, 1909., repr., 1923), 153.

⁷² W.M. Flinders Petrie, *Personal Religion in Egypt Before Christianity* (London: Harper and Brothers, 1909), 59.

⁷³ A.H. Sayce, *The Religions of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clarke, 1902), 229-51.

which was to become the most influential book about Egypt to appear in English in the nineteenth century:

Egyptian history, and the manners of one of the most ancient nations, cannot but be interesting to everyone; and so intimately connected are they with the spiritual accounts of the Israelites, and the events of succeeding ages relative to Judaea, that the name Egypt need only be mentioned to recall the early impressions we have received from the study of the Bible...Another striking result derived from the examination of Egyptian history, is the conviction, that, at the most remote period into which we have been able to penetrate, civilised communities already existed, and society possessed all the features of later ages.⁷⁴

However, the inevitable contrast to the image of Egyptian brilliance and remarkable modernity was emphasis on its lost glory. The loss of Egypt was in tune with romantic sensibilities of the century and, as with ancient Greece and Rome, its disappearance was lamented. Due to the backwardness of modern day Egypt, the image was often of a land of ruins, of ghostly reminder of power that once was. In 'Ozymandias' Shelley described,

And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings,
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare...⁷⁵

However, this image of ancient Egypt tended not to have the effect of feeling in flux, as found with ancient Rome. Egypt's ruin and dissolution was in such ancient antiquity that emphasis was not on a method of its decline, for the details and images were not there. Egypt was instead seen as providing a point of stability, its antiquity equating with certainty and its monuments and monumentality contrasting with dissolution.⁷⁶ In this way the image of Egypt created could be one of eternity. Leigh Hunt, for example, wrote in his Sonnet, 'The Nile':

It flows through old hushed Egypt and its sands,
Like some grave mighty thought threading a dream,
And times and things, as in that vision, seem
Keeping along it their eternal sands.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Gardner Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* (1836; repr., London: John Murray, 1842), vii.

⁷⁵ Shelley, 'Ozymandias' in *The Examiner*, No. 524 (1818), repr. in *Romanticism*, ed. Wu, 849.

⁷⁶ Rice and Macdonald, 'Tea with a Mummy', 7.

⁷⁷ Leigh Hunt, 'The Nile' in *Foliage; Or Poems Original and Translated* (London: C. & J. Ollier, 1818).

The idea of eternity in the image of ancient Egypt is closely linked to the debate on the origin of human civilisation, which occurred throughout the century. Ancient Egypt was traditionally seen as the oldest of human civilisations, the origin of human knowledge and the natural precursor of all later human development. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the civilisation of ancient Egypt was believed to be nearly as old as creation itself. Into the nineteenth century, Wilkinson wrote that Egypt was the oldest state about which we have any records and so this makes Egypt a subject to which ‘no contemplative mind can remain indifferent’.⁷⁸ With the ensuing geological discoveries and increased scientific knowledge, vastly longer time scales were opened up and Egypt could no longer be seen to be as old as humanity itself. Timothy Champion has argued that by 1877 Egypt had slipped in stature to being one of several possible foci for the emergence of human culture.⁷⁹ Indeed, Petrie cites the absolute importance of Egypt but does not attribute a special place to it.⁸⁰ Similarly, Sayce’s book on the religion of ancient Egypt comments, ‘we are heirs of a civilised past, and a goodly portion of the civilised past was the creation of ancient Egypt’ but he does not claim that everything derived from Egypt and emphasises the importance of Babylonian religion as well.⁸¹ Champion argues that due to the demolition of the unique status of ancient Egypt, in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, emphasis on Egypt greatly dwindled. However, I would argue that although Egypt may have lost her unique status in this academic respect, her traditional, Herodotean image as font and conduit of wisdom remained strong and was pervasive throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries. Furthermore, Erik Hornung has argued that while for much of the nineteenth century Egypt ‘drifted off into the exotic’ due to the Victorian preference for classical Greece, by the beginning of the twentieth century emphasis was shifting back towards Hermetic-Hellenistic Egypt and the East.⁸²

⁷⁸ Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs* (1842), viii.

⁷⁹ Timothy Champion, ‘Beyond Egyptology’ in *The Wisdom of Egypt: Changing Visions Throughout the Ages*, eds. Peter Ucko and Timothy Champion (London: UCL, 2003), 161-85, 175-85.

⁸⁰ See for example, W.M. Flinders Petrie, *Personal Religion in Egypt and Religion and Conscience in Ancient Egypt* (London: Methuen and Co, 1898).

⁸¹ Sayce, *Religions of Ancient Egypt*, 251.

⁸² Erik Hornung, *The Secret Lore of Egypt: Its Impact on the West*, trans. David Lorton (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 199.

The feeling of mystery and wonder with which ancient Egypt was held can be seen in the erection of 'Cleopatra's Needle' at the Victoria Embankment on 12th September 1878. There had been complaints about the expense of transporting the obelisk and the crowd was expected to be hostile. However, newspapers reported that there was in fact a strange atmosphere of awe and excitement, as one reporter wrote, the 'aura of Egypt had become so pervasive that even an inanimate object could cast its spell'.⁸³ The obelisk was still believed to contain secret knowledge despite its image as an icon of imperial glory. Travellers and explorers also brought similar perceptions to ancient Egypt. For example, Margaret Benson, daughter of E.W. Benson the Archbishop of Canterbury, experienced Asher, 'full of the mysterious fascination of Egypt, and in the dry exhilarating air one seemed to breathe the very atmosphere of the past'.⁸⁴ Benson interpreted Egypt largely according to her Christian faith, but for others, the mystery of Egypt's secrets made it an enthralling place in itself and the discoveries that might be made could become all the more lofty and fantastic in the imagination of the adventurer precisely because of their lack of revelation. Amelia B. Edwards, later a leading member in foundation of the Egypt Exploration Fund and the first Chair of Egyptology in England at UCL, wrote of her journeys to Egypt in *A Thousand Miles Up The Nile* (1877). The book reads more like an adventure novel than an academic record and must have intrigued and captured the imagination of many. For example, of Denderah she writes,

Without, all was sunshine and splendour; within was silence an mystery...By the half-light that strayed through the portico, we could see vague outlines of a forest of giant columns rising out of the gloom below and vanishing into the gloom above. Beyond these again appeared shadowy vistas of successive halls leading away into depths of impenetrable darkness. It required no great courage to go down those stairs and explore those depths with a party of fellow travellers; but it would have been a gruesome place to venture into alone.⁸⁵

For those wanting to escape the dullness of Victorian England, ancient Egypt could offer adventure and for those dissatisfied with the flux and uncertainties of the modern world, it could promise of greater knowledge.

Central to the importance of Egypt as the source of knowledge is the traditional perception of the esoteric nature of Egyptian knowledge. Greek writers emphasised this

⁸³ Cited in Jarrett, *Sleep of Reason*, 109.

⁸⁴ Margaret Benson and Janey Gourlay, *The Temple of Mut in Asher* (London: John Murray, 1899), 11.

⁸⁵ Amelia B. Edwards, *A Thousand Miles up the Nile* (London: 1877), 124.

image by refraining from writing down the secrets of the mysteries of Egypt since the sharing of esoteric knowledge with the profane and unworthy was seen as far too dangerous. Herodotus implied that he knew the secrets but was reluctant to reveal them, writing, 'I think it would be more appropriate not to relate them' and 'I shall remain silent'.⁸⁶ Plutarch famously recorded that the Temple of Isis at Sais bore the words, 'I am all that is, and that was, and that shall be, and no mortal hath raised the veil from before my face'. The Hermetic tradition, in which the essence of ancient Egyptian philosophy, religion, and magic was thought to survive (and which will be examined in Chapter 5), promoted ideas of mysticism. Hermetic and Egyptian ideas were associated with the concept that knowledge came from revelation and not reason. Practically, this meant that through the study of ancient factual knowledge, revelation may be attained by the worthy. Derived from this idea comes the long history in the Western world of secret societies, which attempted to study the wisdom of the ancients and thereby gain revelation. The potency of knowledge anticipated rendered the societies bound by initiation and serious study.

Probably the most notable secret society which drew on Egyptian wisdom and was not concerned with magic was that of the Freemasons. They traditionally claimed heritage from the Egyptians in the secrets of masonry. Their continued emphasis on ancient Egypt can be seen in the nineteenth century through their Egyptianising tendencies in architecture. For example, in 1860 the building of the Freemasons Hall in Boston, Lincolnshire commenced, the design of which was based on the portico of a Nubian temple and decorated with hieroglyphics.⁸⁷ The tradition of magical societies based on the study of Egyptian knowledge came to modern times by way of the Rosicrucians, who largely grew out of the alchemical tradition. In 1867 the *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (SRIA)* was founded and, as will be examined in Chapter 5, taught the hermetic texts as well as the Hebrew cabbala. It was not until later on in the century with the arrival of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, that the actual practice of ritual magic arrived in Britain. As we shall see later, here ancient Egypt was seen as a profound source of esoteric lore and many Egyptian rituals and practices were adopted.

⁸⁶ Herodotus II.47; II. 170-1; cited in John Tait, 'Classical Views' in *Wisdom of Egypt*, 23-37, 29.

⁸⁷ Curl, *Egyptomania*, 197-8.

The rise of Egyptology and the occult were inextricably interlinked. Works by Egyptologists, in particular those by Budge and, most important of all, his translations of the Egyptian Book of the Dead, stimulated a revival of interest in ancient wisdom and equipped magical societies with further knowledge to aid them in affecting the recovery of the possibilities latent in modern man.

The study of the ancient world overall was greatly affected by the rise of romantic anthropology at the close of the nineteenth century. The Cambridge anthropologist at the helm of this development, Jane Ellen Harrison, wrote in her autobiography,

We Hellenists were, in truth, at that time a “people who sat in darkness”, but we were soon to see a great light, two great lights – archaeology, anthropology. Classics were turning in their long sleep. Old men began to see visions, young men began to dream dreams.⁸⁸

These new ideas were first brought to the fore by James G. Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*, published in twelve volumes between 1890 and 1915. The volumes contain an assembly of ‘facts’ derived from cultures across the world. The savages of the empire are not seen in isolation, but as part of a wider framework incorporating both the ancient world and modern Britain. Frazer asserted the fundamental unity of mankind and offered the thesis that man progresses from magic through religious belief to scientific thought. Frazer was glorified in his day, and adorned with a knighthood, honorary degrees, and membership to the Order of Merit. One newspaper commented that Frazer had changed the world ‘by altering the chemical composition of the cultural air that all men breathe...bringing to a humanity still in bondage freedom from the idol that enslaved them’.⁸⁹ The unintended consequence of Frazer’s book was to stimulate increased interest in primitive religion and Dionysian worship. Mid-century Victorians had domesticated Dionysus into a happy, bucolic god, but Frazer highlighted, in Turner’s words, ‘that in the worship of Dionysus the animal symbolising the god was consumed as ecstatic votaries tore apart and ate the uncooked flesh of the creature’⁹⁰. Frazer concluded that this savagery and irrationality survived well into the classical age of Greece.

⁸⁸ Jane Ellen Harrison, *Reminiscences of a Student's Life* (London, Hogarth Press, 1925), 82-3.

⁸⁹ Cited in Mary Beard, ‘Frazer, Leach, and Virgil: The Popularity (and Unpopularity) of the Golden Bough’ in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 34 (1992), 204-223, 215.

⁹⁰ Turner, *Greek Heritage*, 119.

His ideas were taken up by the so-called Cambridge school of ritualistic interpretation, whose key academics were Harrison, Francis Cornford, and Gilbert Murray. They moved away from the static view of the ancient world and their new discoveries revealed a more ancient and darker past. Emphasis on origins permeated debate in classical studies from the 1870s onward and this challenged old modes of Hellenism. Fifth-century Athens came to be seen not as an early civilisation but a maturity of a far older one. The anthropologists examined Greek myths and argued that they were products of ritual practices that predated the formulation of myths. Harrison's studies revealed an ancient world not governed by the stately gods of the Parthenon, but by a motley gathering of demi-gods, household gods, tribal gods and local gods. She argued that the serenity of the Olympians was a late development and merely a civilised veneer over the still present chthonic practices. She argued that the Olympian gods were severed from the genuine source of religion and life, and thus she attempted to set the irrational at the heart of human nature and as authentic human experience.⁹¹

She highlighted the practices of Dionysian and Orphic religion and argued that both espoused hopes that humans might become like the gods. This was part of an ancient mythical vision of humans becoming divine and whereby worship was based on the worshipper for a short time becoming a deity. Harrison argued that Orphic religion had advanced beyond chthonic worship and had spiritualised Dionysian methods, by rejecting drunkenness in favour of abstinence. She believed that it saw purification as the path to divine life and unity with nature. She asserted that the religion of Orpheus 'is the worship of life itself in its supreme mysteries of ecstasy and love'⁹² and had an ennobling influence on the human race. She believed that the eventual triumph of the Olympian deities was achieved at the cost of repressing humanity's full emotional nature. Thus study of the classics came to recognise the violent and sexual in the ancient world and exalted the power of the irrational. Emphasis on this far earlier, darkly perceived, world emphasised the gulf between the modern and the ancient, but also provided a far more radical model of alternative religion and philosophy of life. This was something earlier

⁹¹ See Jane Ellen Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903) and *Themis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912).

⁹² Harrison, *Prolegomena*, 658.

Victorians had been fearful to recognise and which was repressed in their sanitised handling of the ancient world.

The work of the romantic anthropologists changed the nature of classical scholarship in England and brought the study of the classics up to date with current early twentieth century thought. They rejected rationalistic views and drew heavily on Nietzsche and Bergson. Moreover, as Turner argues, this classicism acted as a channel for modern developments in the intellectual thought of the day and so played an active part in forming some of the most distinctively modern aspects of early twentieth century culture.⁹³ This made paganism all the more new, vital and vibrant. It was something which could be experienced and which appeared to resonate with dissatisfaction with the modern world and yearning for the new. Despite the advances in classical study, the ancient world was still glorified or mishandled according to the sympathies of its critics and so it continued to prominently represent modern hopes and fears. In the closing decades of the nineteenth and opening decades of the twentieth century, more than ever, the ancient world offered a wealth of material that was stimulating and exciting, and which pointed to many radical alternatives in opposition to society.

⁹³ Turner, *Greek Heritage*, 450.

CHAPTER 3: RESPONSIBLE PAGANISM

As Jenkyns has observed, by the end of the nineteenth century, 'Hellenism was becoming less an active enquiry into the past and more a symbol for a certain type of aesthetic ideal which aimed at calm, balance, and proportion'.¹ It was this mechanism that gave rise to the vision and nature of our first variety of paganism. It can perhaps be described as 'responsible' because it expounded a reasoned discourse and accountable morality. This is not to say that the similar word 'respectable' will do; this has too many connotations of external endorsement, which paganism certainly did not have. 'Responsible' paganism drew on the aesthetic ideal to create a highly sanitised view of a noble ancient Greece. It looked forward to a new age combining a muscular, fit nation and simple living with nature as a loving force. It projected its idealisation of ancient Greece forward as the salvation of England, able to renew modern civilisation and the dignity of humanity.

The figures we encounter in this chapter have been the subjects of varying amounts of scholarly attention. At the forefront of this chapter stands Edward Carpenter (1844-1929) - socialist, mystic, poet and seer. Although by no means receiving the appropriate amount of consideration should this be in line with his influence and prominence during his life time, Carpenter has been the subject of a number of books and papers in the past few of decades. The most notable of these are Emile Delavenay, *D.H. Lawrence and Edward Carpenter* (1971); Sheila Rowbotham and Jeffrey Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life* (1977); Chushichi Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter* (1980); Tony Brown (ed.), *Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism* (1990); and Dilip Kumar Barna, *Edward Carpenter: Apostle of Freedom* (1991).² Another key individual to be examined in this chapter, John Addington Symonds (1840-1893), has had some, though less, attention. He has recently been the subject of a collection of papers, *John Addington*

¹ Jenkyns, *Victorians and Ancient Greece*, 274.

² Emile Delavenay, *D.H. Lawrence and Edward Carpenter: A Study in Edwardian Tradition* (London: Heineman, 1971); Sheila Rowbotham and Jeffrey Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life: The Personal and Sexual Politics of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis* (London: Pluto Press, 1977); Chushichi Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter 1844-1929 – Prophet of Human Fellowship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Tony Brown, ed. *Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism* (London: Frank Cass, 1990); Dilip Kumar Barna, *Edward Carpenter: Apostle of Freedom* (Burdwan: University of Burdwan, 1991). Carpenter has also been the subject of a number of PhD theses, the two most recent of which are: Frank B.

Symonds – Culture and Demon Desire (2002); and was widely discussed by Linda Dowling in her influential work, *Hellenism and Homosexuality* (1994).³ The Cambridge don Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson (1887-1932), who completes the triad in terms of the most significant figures in this chapter, has been virtually forgotten in scholarship and has received only cursory academic attention in recent years.⁴ The most recent published work about him was his autobiography, edited and with a foreword by his friend Dennis Proctor, in 1973.⁵

In *Triumph of the Moon* (1999), Hutton identified these three individuals as noteworthy in the Victorian development of a modern paganism.⁶ While some of the published works listed above skirt around the issue, none have approached their subjects from the point of view of paganism. The present chapter attempts to supply for this lack. It seeks to supplement Hutton's identification with a detailed examination of the paganism of these individuals, both in terms of the ideas that mark out this variety of paganism and the attractions that it held. It will also identify and discuss other individuals who used paganism to similar effect. Paul Delany's *Neo-Pagans* (1987), which deals with the Rupert Brooke circle, is notable in this context; however, as we shall see below, I would argue that these individuals turn out, under more precise examination of their paganism, to be barely pagan at all.⁷

The paganism that we meet in this chapter is characterised by an acute sense of disenchantment with the modern world along with large measures of hope that all could heal and change. Ancient Greek civilisation stood at the centre of such hope, as an admirable and intoxicating example of an ennobled society. Symonds ascribed to the

Leib, 'The Moral Vision of Edward Carpenter' (Temple University, 1995); Jenny Fryman, 'William Morris and Edward Carpenter: Back to the Land and the Simple Life 1880-1910' (Gloucester University, 2002).

³ John Pemble, ed. *John Addington Symonds – Culture and the Demon Desire* (London: MacMillan Press, 2000). Of particular note in this volume is P.J. Holliday, 'Symonds and the Model of Ancient Greece' 81-98. Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality* (1994).

⁴ These instances can mainly be found in works which deal with Victorian and Edwardian homosexuality. See, for example, Paul Robinson, *Gay Lives: Homosexual Autobiography from John Addington Symonds to Paul Monette* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). He is also mentioned in biographies of the lives of other Cambridge men; for example, Nigel Jones, *Rupert Brooke: Life, Death and Myth* (London: Richard Cohen Books, 1999), 42.

⁵ *The Autobiography of G. Lowes Dickinson*, ed. Dennis Proctor (London: Duckworth, 1973)

⁶ Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, 26-9.

legacy of the Greeks 'whatever is most great and glorious in the subsequent achievements of the human race'. For him, the Athenian spirit was 'greatness of soul, liberty, intelligence, civilisation, culture, everything which raises men above brutes and slaves, and makes them free beneath the arch of heaven'.⁸ Lowes Dickinson asserted that nothing else provided 'such a combination of beauty and depth, wisdom and wit, gaiety and insight as Greek literature' and so believed that it possessed imperishable power.⁹ He viewed modern society as 'a huge engine and that engine itself is out of gear' and argued that the English man is divorced from Nature, unreclaimed by Art and trained in tenets of religion in which he does not believe.¹⁰ For him, the study of ancient Greece offered joy. In his poem, 'Pindar', he described the result of hard toil through ancient lore as the winning of 'refreshment from Olympian showers':

And lo! A thrill and rush of rosy life,
And wild delirium of a joyous throng,
And strong-limbed beauty flushed with eager strife,
And whirling dance and stately triumph-song!
And all the land is rich with melody
And ringing shouts of laughter, till the moon
Dies down the crimson west, and revelry
Dreams into silence 'neath a quiet noon.¹¹

Thus, we can see both the esteem with which ancient Greece was held, and the reinvigorating power it could bring.

In his popular book for non-experts about ancient Greece, Lowes Dickinson claimed that harmony and close relations to nature were the essence of pagan Greek civilisation.¹² This needed to be understood in relation to Greek concepts of order in nature and the universe. As Lowes Dickinson explained, unlike the Christian conception of an interfering God working through miracles, Pagans believed in the pantheistic presence of a Deity or deities working through nature in an ordered universe. Instead of

⁷ Paul Delany, *The Neo-Pagans – Friendship and Love in the Rupert Brooke Circle* (London: MacMillan, 1987).

⁸ John Addington Symonds, *Studies of the Greek Poets*, 2 vols. (London: Smith Elder, 1873; repr., London: A and C Black, 1902), I. 20-1.

⁹ *Autobiography*, 148.

¹⁰ G. Lowes Dickinson, *Letters from John Chinaman and Other Essays* (1901; repr., London: Grant Allen and Unwin, 1946), 22-3.

¹¹ G. Lowes Dickinson, 'Pindar' in *The Cambridge Review* (7 May 1884). In Cambridge, Kings College Archive Centre, The Papers of Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, GLD 2/2.

¹² G. Lowes Dickinson, *The Greek View of Life* (London: Methuen and Co., 1896; repr., 1917), 1-66.

being critical or self-conscious it was an imaginative way of conceiving the world based on concrete experiences.¹³ Lowes Dickinson stated that Paganism ‘peopled the world with beings having similar passions to men only more powerful and not subject to death’ and so made man completely at home in the world. Thus he hailed Greek religion as the most humanist that ever existed.¹⁴ Symonds similarly commended Greek religion for its absence of a Deity who ‘ruled the human race by punishment and favour, hating certain acts while he tolerated others’ and he praised Greek polytheism and pantheism for its idealisation of all parts of man’s nature rather than having only one ideal to the exclusion of others.¹⁵ This idea also appealed to the folklorist J.S. Stuart-Glennie who argued that Christian concepts of God were a ‘Semitic fallacy’ and so called for ‘a return to the world view of our Aryan forefathers in which God is the sacred name, not of a fictitious Divinity independent of Nature, but of the divine facts of Nature itself, and of that supremest existing fact of all, the co-existing infinite’.¹⁶

The conception of Greek religion as aesthetic and humanitarian was coupled with similar ideas regarding Greek morality. Symonds asserted that the Greeks saw humanity as part of a good and beautiful universe and so did not shy away from any of their natural instincts.¹⁷ Lowes Dickinson argued that the ‘lucid sanity’ of Pagan ethics was that they were completely natural, growing out, as they did, straight from experience:

the experience of a fighting, ruling race, passionate, sensuous, intellectual, convinced beyond dispute, by the practice of life, that power, health, physical prowess, intellectual dexterity, and force are good things, and the weakness, disease, and old age are bad.¹⁸

He asserted that from this foundation of health and beauty rose their science and art, and, in their delight of activity of the body and mind pursued of its own sake, they found the ideal of the individual. The eminent poet and novelist whose work is littered with images

¹³ Lowes Dickinson, *Greek View of Life*, 16; 63.

¹⁴ G. Lowes Dickinson, *The Contribution of Ancient Greece to Modern Life* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1932; repr. in *Letters from John Chinaman*, 1946), 88-105, 100.

¹⁵ John Addington Symonds, *A Problem in Greek Ethics: Being an Inquiry into the Phenomenon of Sexual Inversion: Addressed Especially to Medical Psychologists and Jurists* (London: [Printed for private circulation], 1901), 69-70.

¹⁶ J.S. Stuart-Glennie, ‘The Survival of Paganism’ in L.M.J. Garnett, *Greek Folk-Songs From The Ottoman Provinces of Northern Hellas* (London: Ward and Downey, 1888), 64.

¹⁷ Symonds, *Greek Ethics*, 69.

¹⁸ G. Lowes Dickinson, ‘How Long Halt Ye?’ in *The Independent Review*, No.17 Vol.5 (1905), 27.

of Greek gods and goddesses, George Meredith, wrote similarly of the sanity in the naturalness of Greek ethics. In his poem, 'The Garden of Epicurus', he described:

That Garden of sedate Philosophy
Once flourished, fenced from passion and mishap,
A shining spot on a shaggy map;
Where mind and body, in fair junction free,
Luted their joyful concord; like the tree
From root to flowering twigs a flowing sap.
Clear Wisdom found in tended Nature's lap,
Of gentlemen the happy nursery.

Meredith went on to compare this to the modern world, which he believed was misguided by its adherence to Christian ethics.¹⁹ The close relation of the Greeks to nature was also rendered inseparable from their artistic prowess. For example, Lowes Dickinson asserted that Greek structure, rightness, and simplicity in art was based on their joy of seeing things as they are and judging them normally with exact and harmonious proportion.²⁰ The Greeks were seen as youthful and innocent, able to conceive beauty in a clear and bright light, juxtaposed with modern society for which the free and gracious ideal tended to be remote.

Also in contrast to Christianity, Greece was seen to represent liberty and the liberation of the body. Lowes Dickinson argued that the ancient Greeks believed the whole body needed to be alive for true order to prevail. He held up Pindar's *Odes* as exemplifying the Greek spiritualization of the body and suggested that they conceived even athletics spiritually. However, he was careful to point out that the very delineation into the terms 'material' and 'spiritual' are a Christian invention, of which the Greeks had no notion because, to them, all was unified. Thus he argued that the ancient Greeks had grasped from the first the truth that Christianity did its best to obliterate:

that the life of the spirit grows out of life of the flesh, as the flower grows out of the soil.
Hence their cult of the body; which was, be it observed, a cult, not only of health and strength
and skill, but also of beauty.²¹

¹⁹ George Meredith, 'The Garden of Epicurus' in *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth* (1883) repr. in *The Poems of George Meredith*, 2 vols., ed. Phyllis B. Bartlett (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), I. 292-3.

²⁰ *Autobiography*, 160.

²¹ Lowes Dickinson, 'How Long Halt Ye?', 31-2.

Symonds similarly placed emphasis on Greek cultivation of the human body, arguing that the foundation of the highest Greek art was laid in the beauty of dances, games, races of naked runners, and religious rites.²² The novelist Maurice Hewlett, on being attacked for his 'fleshy' writing, argued along Greek lines that he could not conceive of life without the body and did not want to leave out half of life.²³

This easily flung charge of licentiousness was a serious threat to responsible images of paganism. Writers had to present their images carefully to avoid the charge, with due stress on the identity of the Greeks as gentlemen. This meant emphasis on an aesthetic balance and harmony between the body and the soul, rather than on uncontrolled liberty and natural instinct. Meredith emphasised that the pagan ideal was not based on the wild joy of living, but on living with nature in terms of collectedness, simplicity and sanity. He wrote that asceticism and sensualism are both antagonists of love and so, in life, men must steer themselves between 'the ascetic rocks' and 'the sensual whirlpools'.²⁴ In the same vein, the nature writer, Richard Jefferies, declared that asceticism is the 'vilest blasphemy' since the flesh and the body are worthy of worship; yet, he looked to ancient Sparta as the ideal civilisation since he argued that, among other things, it had a good method for controlling anything wanton. He asserted that he would gladly agree to Spartan discipline so that 'the human being as a human being should enjoy greater health, strength, safety, beauty, happiness'.²⁵ Symonds, in his attempt to maintain a respectable image of ancient Greece, laid emphasis on the Greek virtue, Temperance. He argued that it is a virtue based on physical foundations, which Christian doctrine has confused, and which is centred on the recognition of 'equilibrium which man should aim at in maintenance of his chief glands through sober use of them'.²⁶ He stressed that to live close to nature in the whole demanded temperance and so hoped that 'rightly understood, properly expounded, the doctrine of the equality of all these sins in

²² Symonds, *Greek Poets*, I. 11.

²³ Letter dated 28 January 1908, printed in *The Letters of Maurice Hewlett*, ed. Lawrence Binyan (London: Methuen, 1926), 87.

²⁴ George Meredith, *Diana of the Crossways* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1885), Chapter 37.

²⁵ Richard Jefferies, *The Story of My Heart* (1883; repr., London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1949), 106-10.

²⁶ *The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds*, ed. Phyllis Grosskurth (London: Hutchinson, 1984), 250.

the sight of an inexorable God of natural law would go far to restore mankind to the pristine ideal of human excellence imagined by the Greeks'.²⁷

The idealisation of ancient Greece in this way led these men to call for a return of paganism. Hewlett called for its return because, 'if any place, if any tongue can express what I feel and contain what I worship, it is Greece and Greek'.²⁸ Jefferies believed that 'the Greek countenance is the most beautiful; and when perfect it is almost divine' and declared, 'my heart looks back and sympathises with all the joy and life of ancient time...oh beautiful human life! Tears come to my eyes as I think of it. So beautiful, so inexpressibly beautiful'.²⁹ Lowes Dickinson called for paganism in his article 'How Long Halt Ye?' published in *The Independent Review*, a journal that he was instrumental in founding and which confessed its aim as one 'to prepare public opinion for changes which, in the belief of its promoters, are desirable and necessary'.³⁰ He asserted that to combat the problems of the day, 'no suggestion is so stimulating as that which is embodied in the culture of Ancient Greece' since, as he had previously stressed elsewhere, it held 'the record of the highest achievement of the past and the hope of the highest possibilities for the future'.³¹ Similarly, Symonds wrote of a personal longing for the return of the Greek spirit and mental attitude in the conclusion to his famous study of the Greek poets.³² In one of his own poems, he expressed his desire to journey in time to Hellas luminous and young 'that I might know how pure and fresh and true/ In that first age, when yet the world was new'.³³

Existing as an aesthetic ideal, desire for the return of this type of paganism is also apparent in the reception, if not the production, of Victorian art that depicted ancient Greece. For example, a reviewer of the painting 'Hylas and the Nymphs' by J.W. Waterhouse wrote, 'he has seen it with the eyes of a Greek...he has gained...the exquisite purity and dignity of expression which distinguished the greatest art that the world has yet seen...Nothing jars, nothing obtrudes as out of keeping or over insistent'.

²⁷ *Memoirs of John Addington Symonds*, 252.

²⁸ *Letters of Maurice Hewlett*, vii.

²⁹ Jefferies, *Story of My Heart*, 108.

³⁰ *The Independent Review*, Vol. 1 (August 1903).

³¹ Lowes Dickinson, 'How Long Halt Ye?', 35; Lowes Dickinson, *Greek View of Life*, 197.

³² Symonds, *Greek Poets*, II. 391-415.

³³ John Addington Symonds, 'Genius Amoris Amair: Visio' in *Lyra Virginti Chordarium*, Vol. 1 (Bristol: Arrowsmith, April 1894), Bristol, University of Bristol, John Addington Symonds Collection, DM1254.

Crucially for our context, the reviewer received the painting not just aesthetically, but in the typical Victorian mode of analysis of its message and meaning. He concluded:

We are made to feel that in such a place, if we could find it actually before us, we could still commune with the classic deities who have fled affrighted before the cynical unbelief of modern men. Mr. Waterhouse becomes in this work an apostle of the delightful Paganism, by the loss of which so much that is beautiful has been taken out of life; and he is so persuaded of the charm of the creed to which he subscribes by every stroke of his brush that he can scarcely fail to make, among the people who incline to his view, hosts of sincere converts.³⁴

Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind, that it is not the case that aesthetic pagan ideals were a fixed body of ideas to which people were either attracted or not. Those who wrote favourably about an aesthetic paganism were both attracted to it and created it. The attraction towards paganism was active and aesthetic ideals were used dynamically and creatively.

Indicative of the creative process involved in the construction of this variety of paganism is that the paganism being called for was fundamentally new, influenced by the modern condition and the particular bias of the individual. Lowes Dickinson, with the implied or hoped for answer of 'yes', asked 'can the Greek spirit, rising again more splendid and more potent than before, accomplish the salvation of mankind?'³⁵; thus dreaming of a greater Greece than old. He argued that to achieve this, ethics needed to be reconciled to science and science to ethics, and so in his handling of ancient Greece he directly addressed the modern situation. Jefferies, whose particular pagan ideal was that of ancient Sparta, reflected that 'time cannot be put back on the dial; we cannot return to Sparta'.³⁶ He wrote that modern man needs to begin afresh and that the search for a new and higher set of ideas on which the mind should work can come to fruition through the contemplation of the old pagan example, not of the old pagan example. He singled out Greek statues as having the highest use of all for furnishing the mind with images of true beauty from which to think.³⁷ Symonds reined in his ravings about ancient culture asserting that he had 'no desire to replant a pseudo-paganism on modern soil', this being something 'undesirable and utterly impossible'. He reassured his readers that he aimed to present Christianity and paganism as a synthesis.

³⁴ 'Mr. J.W. Waterhouse's Painting, "Hylas and the Nymphs"' in *The Studio*, 10 (1897), 243-7.

³⁵ Lowes Dickinson, *Contribution of Ancient Greece*, 105.

³⁶ Jefferies, *Story of My Heart*, 43.

Indeed, with pagan thought not existing as a discrete set of ideas, we must consider the way in which Christianity was handled. Although paganism and Christianity were not traditionally thought of as allies, there was often an interplay of ideas so that they were not diametrically opposed. This enabled paganism to be presented in a more respectable manner and can perhaps be seen as both the intention of the writer and the inevitable product of a serious and considered approach to the study of religion. Symonds asserted that modern man should follow the scientific method of Greek morality in order to gain knowledge of nature and not the Christian method of placing the will of a hypothetical ruler between man and the world. However, he was keen to stress that Christianity has revealed new virtues and so it was not the morality but the moral attitude of the Greeks that was worthy of imitation. Furthermore, he argued that in its best form, Greek morality was not antagonistic to Christian morality and that the Greek importance of living in harmony with nature was exactly how Christ lived.³⁸ Hewlett contributed to this idea in his novel *Pan and the Young Shepherd* (1898), which presented Pan as a kind of 'Green Jesus'.³⁹ Symonds also argued that the Greek spirit has continued in history and has vitalised all great progressive races of mankind. He further blurred the lines between paganism and Christianity by asserting the Greek influence on Christendom to the extent that it even brought forth the idea of the Trinity and gave inspiration to St. John.⁴⁰ Meredith similarly stated that Christianity did not supply everything, but conceded that later paganism had been in need of reproof.⁴¹

Lowes Dickinson also considered the place of Christianity. As one of the foremost advocates of a return to paganism, he wrote that Christianity was partly false, in terms of its asceticism, and partly inadequate, since it did not deal with life. He argued:

We must, I feel clear, aim, as the Greeks did, at health and strength and beauty; we must value these things, as they did, not for themselves alone, but for the spiritual life of which they are the indispensable basis; we must learn that the pursuit of wealth, nay of livelihood even stultifies itself, so soon as it excludes the possibility of leisure for which alone it has any value; for that, in the cultivation of leisure, that is, of activity good in itself, lies the key and the meaning of life as far as we can clearly discern it.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 112.

³⁸ Symonds, *Greek Poets*, II. 396-400.

³⁹ Maurice Hewlett, *Pan and the Young Shepherd* (London: Bodley Head, 1898).

⁴⁰ Symonds, *Greek Poets*, II. 5.

⁴¹ Letter to F.A. Maxse in *The Collected Letters of George Meredith*, ed. C.L. Cline (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), Letter no. 140.

However, he added that Christianity brought the further conviction that 'we must somehow or other make this ideal accessible to all'. Therefore, although he saw Christian ethics as confused and contradictory, he did recognise value in their concern for the demands and needs for the masses.⁴² He also asked the question, 'are we, in our inmost and ultimate conviction, Christians, or Pagans, or perhaps both?' and attempted to make his paganism less radical by presenting modern society as half pagan already, no longer Christian in the sense and tradition of the Christian Church with even her preachers unwittingly extolling pagan natural ethics.⁴³ In *A Modern Symposium* he was more explicit about the relationship between paganism and Christianity. Here his keynote speaker, Vivian (who is largely analogous with Meredith), argued that the modern world needs the pagan trinity - love (Aphrodite), beauty (Apollo), and wisdom (Athene) - as well as the Christianity trinity - faith, hope, and charity. He believed that through pagan soil Christianity could come to maturity, rather than the overthrow of all things Christian. The logic of the argument was that faith, hope, and charity need a goal, and that this is provided by the Greek trinity. Thus the Christian trinity must 'fall into the womb' of the Greek trinity and so, the speaker cried, 'Greece stands eternally on the threshold of the new life...Apollo, Aphrodite, Athene are before us not behind'.⁴⁴

Attempts to reconcile paganism and Christianity toned down the radical nature of paganism and bear witness to the fact that these thinkers were not flippant in their appreciation of paganism. Crucially, however, it can also be seen as the step necessary for these men to believe in what they wrote. Indeed, it must be borne in mind that they were not robust pagans, but were instead feeling their way towards religious ideas they felt they could accept. Yet, in another sense, they were often shrewdly aware of the wider situation and so in examining the nature of the images in this variety we must also consider the impact of their awareness for the need to present paganism responsibly to counter the licentious images of paganism in circulation. Maurice Hewlett was aware of the different senses of the word 'paganism'. In *Earthwork Out of Tuscany* (1895) he described Siena as 'nothing freak and open...none of your robust, red-lunged, open-air

⁴² Lowes Dickinson, 'How Long Halt Ye?', 35-6.

⁴³ Lowes Dickinson, 'How Long Halt Ye?', 29; 27.

⁴⁴ G. Lowes Dickinson, *A Modern Symposium* (London: Brimley Johnson and Ince, 1905), 151-9.

Paganism'. His version of what he called 'pure paganism' is reserved for his description of Pisa's buildings, which have 'a touch of genuine Paganism which loves the daedal earth and cannot bring itself to be out of touch with it'.⁴⁵ Lowes Dickinson was similarly aware of the different images of paganism present at the time. In an unpublished drama, 'War and Peace: A Dramatic Fantasia', the character named the 'Cynic' warns of the decadent and licentious 'Yellow Peril' which is 'hundreds of millions of pagans' whereby 'these pagans are waiting for the moment when they can Exterminate the Christians'. The significance is that the 'Cynic' turns out to be just one part of a world wide moral panic which is lashing out at various and imagined enemies with the effect of thwarting peace.⁴⁶ Thus Lowes Dickinson highlighted his awareness of and contempt for the fact that the word 'pagan' was often used as a polemical weapon in propaganda.

For Lowes Dickinson, the term 'pagan' meant something completely different and removed from the taint of sin. One way of attempting to discern what an author means by the word 'pagan' is by examining its use as a descriptive word amongst other descriptive words. In his autobiography, Lowes Dickinson described Mrs Schiller, mother of his Cambridge friend Ferdinand Schiller, as 'the kindest, humblest, most pagan woman I have ever known' and again, twenty pages later, as a 'most human, loving, humorous, pagan woman'. Here we must assume 'pagan' denotes a positive description for a caring mother. Furthermore, what is interesting is that between these two uses of the word 'pagan' there is a section describing Mrs Schiller's abhorrence and repulsion at Oscar Wilde's active homosexuality.⁴⁷ As shall be discussed in Chapter 4, at the time of the Wilde trial the word 'pagan' was banded about as slander, to describe Wilde's 'morally disreputable' behaviour. Thus it seems that Lowes Dickinson was perhaps deliberately trying to distance the word 'pagan' from its negative connotations. He was particularly likely to be sensitive to this because he was a homosexual himself, one of his lovers in fact being Ferdinand Schiller.⁴⁸ Therefore, it is by no means just historians looking back in retrospect who recognise such differing images of paganism. In recognising this awareness in the nineteenth century we can more fully understand how images of

⁴⁵ Maurice Hewlett, *Earthwork out of Tuscany: Being Impressions and Translations* (London: J.M. Dent, 1895), Chapter 8; Chapter 12.

⁴⁶ G. Lowes Dickinson, 'War and Peace: A Dramatic Fantasia', GLD 4/3.

⁴⁷ *Autobiography*, 93-113.

paganism were constructed and so realise this consciousness as a contributing factor in the overriding images of the paganism in this variety as sanitised, noble, and morally reputable. However, where there is awareness, we must also remember non-awareness. Symonds, for example, in an unpublished pencil diagram about the rise of humanity defined paganism as 'moral and religious indifference'.⁴⁹ Yet, as we have seen, he was a key figure in the creation of the aesthetic image of paganism and one who was greatly attracted to ancient Greece. Perhaps Symonds did not prepare for historians to pick through his personal notes and use of his every word with a fine tooth comb, but we must also remember that images and ideas vary from person to person and within each person, from day to day. In examining the images created of a responsible paganism we are not analysing a cohesive, fully formed set of ideas about paganism but emerging images and thoughts.

Let us next examine Edward Carpenter's vision of paganism. Carpenter stands at the forefront of our images of 'responsible' paganism, both shaping and translating the aesthetic pagan ideals into a most extensive and influential calling to an ideal future society. The literary scholar Emile Delavenay has called Carpenter the 'Victorian gentleman in revolt – but still the gentleman'.⁵⁰ Indeed, Carpenter's radical work and life is tempered by a reasonable moderation. He was born into a comfortable middle-class family and his pursuit of an academic career took him as an undergraduate in 1864 to Cambridge. After graduating, Trinity College Cambridge made him a fellow and so, as was required at the time, Carpenter was ordained into holy orders. In 1873 he took a prolonged holiday to Italy and on his return had a vision that he must make his life 'with the mass of the people and the manual workers'.⁵¹ He promptly relinquished the fellowship and began to work for the University Extension scheme, which operated in the North of England and aimed at providing education for those who would not otherwise come into contact with universities. With the death of his father in 1882, Carpenter came into his inheritance and bought the small farm of Millthorpe, near Sheffield, which was to

⁴⁸ However, Lowes Dickinson was never a fully active homosexual. See below.

⁴⁹ Manuscript of 'The Humanistic Spirit', Symonds Collection, DM1893 Box 10.

⁵⁰ Delavenay, *Lawrence and Carpenter*, 5.

⁵¹ Edward Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1916), 67.

be his home until old age in 1922. At Millthorpe, Carpenter set about immersing himself in the life of the workers, living the 'simple life' and 'returning to nature'. Between 1883 and 1902 he published separately the four parts of what was to become his seminal work, *Towards Democracy*. Upon publication of the 1905 collected edition by Swann Sonnenschein, Carpenter fast became a well known figure in Edwardian society and by 1916 16,000 copies of the book had been sold.⁵² Millthorpe came to be seen as an enclave of the new life of which he preached and a place of pilgrimage for admirers and intellectuals.

Any discussion of Carpenter is not complete without paying credit to the supreme influence of Walt Whitman on his work and thought. Carpenter first read Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* in 1868 and in 1877 and 1884 he traveled to America to visit his hero.⁵³ Carpenter hailed Whitman as Greek in spirit and saw him as the inaugurator of a new world of democratic ideals, marking 'the stage of human evolution not yet reached, and hardly suspected, by humanity at large'.⁵⁴ Whitman's work penetrated deep into Carpenter's thought and much of his work is a restatement of Whitman's message. Even Whitman's reversion to a primitive, simple, and direct method of verse was copied by Carpenter in *Towards Democracy*. Carpenter was fully aware of his debt to Whitman and lodged himself at his side, seeing *Towards Democracy* as the moon to Whitman's sun, a milder contribution championing Whitman's radiant vision as expressed in *Leaves of Grass*.⁵⁵ Whitman returned the praise, describing Carpenter as 'one of my most valued English friends' and 'one of the torch bearers'.⁵⁶ It should be noted that Whitman's influence runs deeply throughout the much of this variety of paganism. Symonds wrote,

I find it difficult to speak of *Leaves of Grass* without exaggeration...his concrete passionate faith in the world, combined with the man's multiform experience, his human sympathy, his thrill of love and comradeship, sent a current of vitalizing magnetism through my

⁵² Matt Cook, "'A New City of Friends': London and Homosexuality in the 1890s' in *History Workshop Journal*, 56 (2003), 33-58; 44.

⁵³ For details of his trips to America see Edward Carpenter, *Days with Walt Whitman: With Some Notes on his Life and Work* (London: George Allen, 1906; repr., London: Grant Allen and Unwin, 1921).

⁵⁴ Carpenter, *Days with Walt Whitman*, 55.

⁵⁵ Edward Carpenter, *Towards Democracy* (4 Parts 1883-1902; complete edition, London: Swann Sonnenschein and S. Clarke, 1905; repr., London: George Allen and Unwin, 1921), Endnote.

⁵⁶ Letter dated 23 August 1892, in *Walt Whitman – The Correspondence, Vol. V 1890-1892*, ed. Edwin Haviland Miller (New York: New York University Press, 1964), 233.

speculations...I felt, through him, what it really is to be a member of the universe I sought to worship.⁵⁷

Symonds also perceived the influence of Whitman in the work of Jefferies, describing Jefferies's *The Story of My Heart* (1883) as 'Walt Whitman adopted to the style of the gamekeeper'.⁵⁸ Carpenter highlighted two other people who for him embodied forerunners of the spirit of the new era, Richard Wagner and J.F. Millet. He attributed to them, as he did to Whitman, a strong realism, a sense of the whole, and a prophetic sense of the life of the people.⁵⁹ To the poet Shelley, Carpenter reserved the place of 'the lark which almost before dawn soared from the darkened earth'.⁶⁰

Carpenter placed real value and importance on the ancients. Perceiving truth in the dreams of the ancients, he asserted that 'distant nations with obsolete languages and men and women long dead, still give us something direct out of their hearts'.⁶¹ He believed that modern society was animated by fear, ignorance, and non-perception, and stood in direct contrast to the naturally healthy, carefree, and joyous life of pagan peoples; yet he also anticipated a new society which would relieve all suffering.⁶² The horror of the present stage stemmed from its loss of unity with nature and within human beings. He argued that in primitive society humans were unfallen, but they were unaware of what they were and so to attain self-knowledge man had to fall. The present time was this in-between stage of self-consciousness, which broke up the unity of man and brought imperfection, division and strife.

The third and final stage bore the message of joy. The 'I' in *Towards Democracy*, which heralds the new stage and stands ambiguously as both nature and a man, cried 'I am the poet of hitherto unuttered joy' and '[I] take you, even in life, to Elysian fields'.⁶³ This stage meant a transformation of self-consciousness from the outer and mortal part of man to the inner and undying. It meant recognition of a 'cosmic consciousness'; the soul

⁵⁷ *Memoirs of John Addington Symonds*, 246.

⁵⁸ Letter dated 4 December 1883, in *The Letters and Papers of John Addington Symonds*, ed. Horatio F. Brown (London: John Murray, 1923), 162.

⁵⁹ Edward Carpenter, *Angels' Wings: A Series of Essays on Art and its Relation to Life* (1898; repr., London: Swann Sonnenschein, 1899), 6-24.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁶² Edward Carpenter, *Non-Governmental Society* (London: A.C. Fifield, 1911), 7-31; Edward Carpenter, *Pagan and Christian Creeds: Their Origin and Meaning* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1920), 271-9.

⁶³ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, 65; 155.

of man that seems to remember beyond reason more harmonious times and so is able to discern unity and appropriate the inner meaning of things. Central to such assertion rests the Platonic notion of the divinity of the soul. Plato saw the world as existing in two orders, the temporal and the eternal. Man's soul was held up as an essence, and as these are eternal so is the soul. A man's soul was seen as part of an over-arching world soul and by listening to one's soul, as manifest in man's reason, men could come to understand and glimpse the eternal. This is similar to the 'inner voice' that apparently came to Socrates throughout his life.⁶⁴ Carpenter argued that by listening to this consciousness and unifying it with the needs of the body, knowledge of such things as good and evil would pass away and be absorbed into a higher knowledge. This would transcend all custom and free humans from the bondage of theories and creeds. Carpenter called this the 'New Morality', the morality which hails realisation of kinship with animals and with all humans, and the realisation that the body need not be regarded as impure.⁶⁵

Carpenter recognised the radical nature of this call, describing it in *Towards Democracy* in terms of the Greek god Pan:

I follow you far afield and into the untrodden woods, and there remote from man you disclose yourself to me, goat-footed and sitting on a rock – as to the Athenian runner of old...Of the goat-legged God peering over the tops of the clouds; of the wild creature running in the woods of whom the rabbits are not afraid; of him who peeps his horns in at the windows of the churches, and the congregations cross themselves and the parson sees his loudest; of the shameless lusty unpresentable pal; of the despised one hobbling on hoofs – I dream.⁶⁶

Carpenter asserted that the Greeks were not afraid of Pan but the Christians were and so made him their Devil.⁶⁷ However, this is not to say that Carpenter wanted the return of Pan in the Christian vision of him; rather, unlike Christianity, the New Morality would allow all passions and varieties of human nature to have their place. Indeed, the New Morality was not a code but the realisation of the Common Life. His vision was one where

⁶⁴ Plato, *Phaedrus*; trans. Walter Hamilton (Middlesex: Penguin, 1973), 43.

⁶⁵ Edward Carpenter, *Civilisation: its Cause and Cure, and Other Essays* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1889), 43-9.

⁶⁶ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, 19.

⁶⁷ Carpenter, *Angels' Wings*, 93.

The sun shines, as of old; the stars look down from heaven; the moon, crescent, sails in the twilight; on the bushy tops of the warm nights, naked, with mad dance and song, the earth-children address themselves to love.⁶⁸

Carpenter argued that this perfect union is like the old paganism but ‘a thousand times intensified’.⁶⁹ He argued that Christianity would admit that it sprang from the old religion and so ancient symbols and rituals would be rehabilitated. Ancient practices would come to acquire increased significance since the sense of perception of unity would be so heightened and illuminated that man would realise the inner meaning of the ancient religion. Nothing would be radically altered from the old religion, the progress of self-consciousness leaving only the tiniest crack between the first and third stages of human development. Carpenter described this as society ‘after long ages resuming the broken thread – coming back after a long and necessary parenthesis’.⁷⁰

Within this radical message there are several more respectable aspects. Firstly, he asserted the ideal of an aesthetic paganism, that the ancient Greeks had been a moral people and strangers to wanton excess. Secondly, although he saw Christianity as an episode, this is not to say he dismissed it in entirety. He attempted to reconcile paganism and Christianity and his message was often perceived as such. Mrs Havelock Ellis (Edith Lees) wrote in the magazine, *The Forum*, that Carpenter’s message was that paganism and Christianity are not at war but allies;⁷¹ while the former clergyman and fellow writer, Edward Lewis, concluded that ‘he asks for a revival of Paganism within the Christian ethic’.⁷² Like Lowes Dickinson, Carpenter commended Christianity for its concern for the masses.⁷³ Thirdly, Carpenter’s call was to ‘resume the ancient dignity of your race, lost, almost forgotten as it is’.⁷⁴ This drew on more mainstream ideas of patriotism. Although his hopes were for all of mankind, Carpenter explicitly placed England at the centre of his message. He dreamed that England would understand that her ‘true mission

⁶⁸ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, 3.

⁶⁹ Carpenter, *Civilisation*, 47.

⁷⁰ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, 219.

⁷¹ Mrs Havelock Ellis, ‘Edward Carpenter’s Message to his Age’ in *The Forum* (August, 1910), 172-185. In Sheffield, Sheffield City Library Archives, The Edward Carpenter Collection, Reel 38: Pamphlets and Periodicals.

⁷² Edward Lewis, *Edward Carpenter: An Exposition and An Appreciation* (London: Methuen, 1915), 89.

⁷³ Carpenter, *Pagan and Christian Creeds*, 220.

⁷⁴ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, 178.

to the world – her true Patriotism’ was as ‘the nurse of all Humanity’.⁷⁵ He expressed his call emphatically in the poem, which set to music became a socialist anthem, ‘England Arise!’⁷⁶ Fourthly, Carpenter placed emphasis on the newness of his future society. Although much of the old paganism would be restored, through this new higher conscience, Carpenter argued that his was a promise of ‘something better than Paganism and better than Christianity’.⁷⁷ Therefore, a writer for *The Free Comrade* could assert, stressing the respectability of Carpenter’s message, ‘this new Nature-love is greater than that of Greek, too, for that hardly knew the soul and exalted vice equally with normal joy. But now all is clean and inclusive’.⁷⁸ Indeed, Carpenter was hesitant to use the word ‘pagan’ to describe his vision. It is not until his autobiographical work, *My Days and Dreams*, written towards the end of his most prolific period of writing, that he uses the word ‘pagan’ to directly denote his vision, and then he only does so by prefixing it with the word ‘neo’, undoubtedly to stress the newness and difference of this paganism. In the same section of this autobiography he refers to Edward Lewis’s work as that of ‘The New Paganism’ and heralds him as an ‘apostle of a new and vital Paganism’.⁷⁹ In recognising Carpenter’s vision of paganism as no carbon copy of the old, we can see both how he could distance himself from any unattractive elements of the old paganism and tailor pagan ideals to cater for modern day concerns.

Carpenter’s vision was infused with an emphasis on beauty and art. Throughout *Angels’ Wings* the supremacy of ancient Greece in art is stressed. Carpenter believed that one of the greatest joys and needs of life is self-expression, and so assessed that an ideal society should be like that of ancient Greece; one that expresses itself beautifully and artistically through life.⁸⁰ He argued that Greek art reveals more than the sentiments of the day because, through its discipleship to all of Nature, it expresses the incentive to perfection.⁸¹ Linked to this was the importance of art in its relation to creation; here Carpenter’s pagan ideal combined with modern ideas. He asserted that his new human

⁷⁵ Edward Carpenter, *Boer and Briton* (Manchester: Labour Press, 1900), 1-4. In Carpenter Collection, Reel 38.

⁷⁶ Edward Carpenter, *England Arise! Socialist Marching Song* (London: The Modern Press, 1886).

⁷⁷ Carpenter, *Pagan and Christian Creeds*, 17.

⁷⁸ J.W. Lloyd, in *The Free Comrade* (October, 1902) 3-8. In Carpenter Collection, Reel 38.

⁷⁹ Carpenter, *Days and Dreams*, 265-7.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 305.

⁸¹ Edward Carpenter, *The Religious Influence of Art* (London: Deighton Bell and Co, 1870), 57.

society would be the 'essence of all expression, the surrender of all Art'.⁸² In order to understand what he meant by this we need to appreciate Carpenter as an evolutionist. Carpenter used the word 'democracy' to mean, in Edward Lewis's words, 'a perpetual Will to new incarnation, new creation'⁸³ and his *The Art of Creation* anticipates by several years some of Henri Bergson's ideas in *L'Evolution Creatrice*. Carpenter was attracted to the evolutionary theory of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, the French botanist and zoologist who formulated one of the earliest theories of evolution in his major theoretical work, *Philosophie Zoologique* (1809). Carpenter liked Lamarck's ideas because they allowed more scope for inner growth rather than external accident. However, he manipulated Lamarck's argument to suit his own, replacing as the function of variation Lamarck's 'necessity' for the more active 'desire' channelled through love. Carpenter believed that creation was in a state of everlasting evolution, expressing inner meanings by outer forms. He argued that it was by following thought and emotion, or in other words, self-expression, that utterances of a supreme life could be unlocked. This meant that sex, in the form of desire and love, could be seen as an evolutionary imperative.⁸⁴ He adopted Whitman's use of the term 'exfoliation' to describe the shedding of old forms and growing the new in the shell of the old.⁸⁵ Carpenter argued that to grow the new stage, the old forms of simple consciousness and self-consciousness needed to act and react upon each other to affect a 'psychological evolution'.⁸⁶ He has often been called utopian, but by examining his evolutionary theory we can see that he was instead a believer in the state of ever growing perfection.⁸⁷ Carpenter used ideas of evolution to emphasise pagan ideals of beauty and joy and give a respectable validity to desire and love.

Another important aspect of Carpenter's vision was his emphasis on the unity and wholeness of things. He envisaged man not as a separate entity but as an integral part of nature. He wrote that when human beings desecrate nature they also desecrate man

⁸² Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, 9.

⁸³ Lewis, *Edward Carpenter*, 39.

⁸⁴ Edward Carpenter, *The Art of Creation: Essays on the Self and its Powers* (London: George Allen, 1904).

⁸⁵ 'Exfoliation' in Carpenter, *Civilisation*, 129-47.

⁸⁶ Carpenter, *Pagan and Christian Creeds*, 271-3

⁸⁷ Edward Carpenter, *Love's Coming Of Age: a Series of Papers on the Relations of the Sexes* (Manchester, Labour Press, 1896; repr., London: Methuen, 1914), 147-9.

himself and so claimed that modern society, living far from nature, has cast out beauty and true expressiveness from the realms of man.⁸⁸ This is connected to the idea that human experience is a microcosm of the deep reality of the universe and so is part of an integrated pattern. Carpenter called for the time when man 'sees that it is only habit, and illusion of difference, that divides and perceives after all that it is the same human creature that flies in the air, swims in the sea, or walks biped upon the land'.⁸⁹ This, he argued, should be a time when man would consciously realise what the ancient Greeks subconsciously felt, and feel himself absolutely indivisibly and indestructibly a part of the great whole. Carpenter applied this perception of unity to the connection between the body and soul within man. He argued that in the modern world there is disunity between body and soul because modern man suppresses his desires and passions (which are the voice of his soul, or, the cosmic consciousness). Carpenter urged people to adopt the ancient Greek way of listening to desires as guides to perfection because he believed that the soul in its completed relation to the body would be the foundation of the new life. 'Sex still goes first' he wrote, 'and hands, eyes, mouth, brain follow; from the midst of the belly and thighs radiate the knowledge of self, religion and immortality'.⁹⁰ Such emphasis led Carpenter to argue that the 'nature-sex-mysticism in wild and bacchanalian festivals of earlier nations...in some form or other will probably reassert itself'.⁹¹

Although Carpenter has been attributed with discovering the 'bliss of being through the worship of the body',⁹² this was not intended to be manifest as over-indulgence and instead the keynote was one of balance. Carpenter used the idealised view of ancient Greece to illustrate the type of sober society he envisaged:

The Greeks of old, having on the whole clean bodies, treated them with respect and distinction. The young men appeared quite naked in the palaestra, and even the girls of Sparta ran races publicly in the same condition; and some day when our bodies (and minds too) have become clean we shall return to similar institutions.⁹³

⁸⁸ Edward Carpenter, *Towards Industrial Freedom* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1917), 61.

⁸⁹ Edward Carpenter, 'Custom' in *The Fortnightly Review* (July, 1888), 136-141; repr. in Carpenter, *Civilisation*, 156.

⁹⁰ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, 18.

⁹¹ Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age*, 139.

⁹² Edward Aveling, *Progress* (September 1883), cited in Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter*, 51.

⁹³ Carpenter, *Pagan and Christian Creeds*, 197.

Moreover, the idea of balance was an expression of his primary concern of love. Carpenter perceived his brand of democracy as the love-kingdom, first in the heart and then issuing into social organisation. Carpenter believed that love linked the finite with the infinite and so argued that love needed to be the guiding principle in free society. For him, it is love that drives passions, as it is love that tempers them. Thus reconciliation of the individual with society would involve the subordination of desires, not in the sense of restrictions upon freedom, but rather by the subjection of desires to the true self.⁹⁴ In a collection of papers written by his friends and admirers after his death, Lowes Dickinson wrote that all of Carpenter's concerns ensued from his own love of men and nature.⁹⁵

In *Towards Democracy* Carpenter proclaimed:

I saw the joy of free open life under the sun:
The green sun-delighting earth and rolling sea I saw,
The free sufficing life – sweet comradeship, few needs and common pleasure – the needless, endless
 burdens all cast aside,
Not as a sentimental vision, but as a fact and a necessity existing...⁹⁶

Central to Carpenter's message and this variety of paganism is an inherent social emphasis. Carpenter was described at the time as 'Social Conscience incarnate',⁹⁷ and he had very strong links to Fabianism and early socialism.⁹⁸ Lowes Dickinson was also concerned with the social realm. He recognised the problems of impotent romanticist yearnings and throughout his life increasingly regarded his work as social utility, rejecting the life of an artist or philosopher so that he could directly influence wider life and conduct. *The Greek View of Life* was specifically aimed at 'all the curious laymen' with no knowledge of the language and he hated the sort of scholarly snobbery that tried to keep the classics the preserve of an educated minority.⁹⁹ Hewlett similarly hoped his books would be read by the common people rather than the cultivated and elect. Carpenter, however, stands out because he dramatically changed his whole lifestyle due

⁹⁴ Carpenter, *Civilisation*, 126.

⁹⁵ G. Lowes Dickinson, 'Edward Carpenter as a Friend' in *Edward Carpenter: In Appreciation*, ed. Gilbert Beith (London: Allen and Unwin, 1931), 34-46, 36.

⁹⁶ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, 145.

⁹⁷ Lloyd, in *The Free Comrade*, 4.

⁹⁸ See Rowbotham and Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life*, 1-23.

⁹⁹ G. Lowes Dickinson, 'Greek and the Spring' in *Manchester Guardian* (29 May, 1912). In GLD 1/17.

to his social emphasis. His admiration of ancient Greece was embedded in the idea that Greek ethics were not separate from aesthetics, such that Greek life was artistic in the highest sense. His crucial chime was that the 'Art of Life is that Life is Art'. He looked to the Parthenon frieze of fifth-century Athens as the most beautiful work in the world, because by its spontaneity it represented actual daily life in Athens, a life which was 'all united by threads of poetry, of tradition, of custom, of religion, in one overruling idea of order, harmony, beauty and dedication to the gods and the common life'.¹⁰⁰ He argued that the life of modern men should undergo a 'Simplification' and a 'Return to Nature' in preparation for a more extended expression of the human spirit and to attain this artistry. Through his farm at Millthorpe he practiced what he preached and urged others to do likewise:

*Try to attain, to consistently practice attainment...every effort in that region is success, and every onward push, however small, and however little result it may show, is really a move forward, and one step nearer the light.*¹⁰¹

Carpenter rejected ideas of individual plight for inner harmony, as advocated and made popular by the American Transcendentalists, in preference for a communal search, which engaged with the whole.¹⁰² Carpenter identified self-interest with common interest and so his ideas necessitated social action; yet Millthorpe was to be just an enclave, rather than the finished product, of the new life. Carpenter argued that the new society could not be achieved without the loving fusion of all of humanity:

If I am not level with the lowest I am nothing; and if I did not know for a certainty that the craziest sot in the village is my equal, and were I not proud to have him walk with me as my friend, I would not write another word – for in this is my strength.¹⁰³

He wanted Millthorpe to be a place where all classes met and distinction dissolved. In reality he did not overcome all class differences, but it was certainly a place where workers were loved and respected by him.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Carpenter, *Angels' Wings*, 63-4.

¹⁰¹ Carpenter, *Pagan and Christian Creeds*, 294.

¹⁰² Transcendentalist ideas can be seen particularly in the life and works of Henry David Thoreau. Carpenter was an admirer of Thoreau and they shared a belief in the need for simple living to achieve harmony; however, Thoreau embarked on individualist experiments, living alone in order to find inner harmony. Thoreau detailed his individualistic experiments in which he lived alone in a hut on the shores of Walden Pond, on the outskirts of Concord in *Walden* (1854).

¹⁰³ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, 6.

Carpenter's concern was not just with the dissolution of class structure. He believed that the lowest of society should be especially exalted because, more than any other people, they have remained closest to paganism. He argued that their special importance derived from their marginalized social position, which meant they had been least affected by civilisation and retained remnants of pagan innocence. He believed, as summed up in, 'The Trysting', in 'a natural child, untaught, reckless of custom and what they call religion. He hears and sees things hidden from the learned; he glimpses forms beyond the walls of Time'.¹⁰⁵ Part of his attraction to Whitman, Millet, and Wagner was for their love of humble peasants, to whom, as natural unconsciousness beings, they gave the status of near gods.¹⁰⁶ Carpenter pondered on his early love, the farm worker Bob Muirhead, describing his character as of 'singular naïve perfection. So Homeric, like the man of the Golden Age – has never before dawned upon my blaze and over the civilised mind'.¹⁰⁷ On seeing Muirhead bathe he commented 'his type is not unlike the Greek statues and I have been wondering whether that explains the peculiarly simple strong naïve cast of his mind'.¹⁰⁸ Carpenter's attraction to men outside of his class was probably a manifestation of his overall attraction to a natural state of innocence. His life-long love, George Merrill, delighted him for being untouched by the conditioning and artificial pressures of modern England; for having never even heard of Gethsemane, or the *Saturday Review*.¹⁰⁹ Merrill became an integral part of life at Millthorpe and it was he who often left visitors with some of their more memorable experiences. Untamed by convention, he groped the visiting E.M. Forster, leaving the writer both astonished and intrigued. Merrill also enchanted Frederic Brooks who, when later writing of his visit, fondly recalled the impression made on him of George dancing outside the farm as his carriage departed for London.¹¹⁰ Carpenter saw Merrill's way of life as representing simplicity and sanity and advocated this way as the giver of love and happiness.

¹⁰⁴ See Rowbotham and Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life*, 76-7.

¹⁰⁵ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, 421.

¹⁰⁶ Carpenter, *Angels' Wings*, 22.

¹⁰⁷ Letter to James Brown, 23 April 1889, Carpenter Collection, MSS 372-1.

¹⁰⁸ Letter to James Brown, 16 January 1890, Carpenter Collection, MSS 372-5.

¹⁰⁹ In Edward Frederick Carpenter, *Edward Carpenter 1844-1929: Democratic Author and Poet – A Restatement and Appraisal* (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1970), 18.

¹¹⁰ Frederic Brooks, 'A Visit to Edward Carpenter' in *The Epoch* (November, 1915), 325-33. In Carpenter Collection, Reel 38.

Linked particularly to the farming lifestyle, the way of life was to be out-of-doors; this would 'restore the balance and ultimately bring us back to sanity and health'.¹¹¹ Carpenter argued that it was only from 'the knowledge and habits gained in a simple self-supporting life that the higher knowledge and fine arts are really found' and so he envisaged the degraded carrying the new world.¹¹² For Carpenter, living in the open air enabled the body to be kept 'pure, very pure'¹¹³ and he criticized modern society for placing too much emphasis on intellectual work to the detriment of the development of the whole body. He commanded those in the British Museum to 'Come, come away! leave books, traditions, all the dross of centuries/ Clean, clean thy wings, and fly through other worlds'.¹¹⁴ He believed that the upper classes ended up studying only the ghost of things in books and lived divorced from actual fact, whereas men should instead combine mental and manual work. In 'The One Foundation' he positioned land as the foundation element of human life, arguing that 'only the people can thrive that loves its land and swears to make it beautiful'.¹¹⁵ Thus he believed that a wide scale restructuring of industry towards self-supporting work was needed. Once self-supporting, he argued, industry would regain its spontaneity and gladness, which are the essence of its nature and the necessary roots of all art, joy and beauty. In *Towards Democracy* he prophesied, 'the earth remains and daily life remains, and the scrubbing of doorsteps, and the house and the care of the house remains; but Joy fills it, fills the house full and swells to the sky and reaches to the stars: all Joy!'¹¹⁶

Symonds expressed to Carpenter that he found the idea of simple living attractive; however, in practice, he considered himself too ill to adopt it.¹¹⁷ Lowes Dickinson as a young man spent the summer of 1885 working on Harold Cox's co-operative farm and imagined himself 'beginning to live the right kind of life, manual work on the one hand and intellectual, poetical creation on the other'. Writing retrospectively in the 1920s

¹¹¹ Carpenter, *Pagan and Christian Creeds*, 256.

¹¹² 'The Enchanted Thicket' in Edward Carpenter, *England's Ideal and Other Papers* (Swan Sonnenschein, London, 1887), 148.

¹¹³ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, 93.

¹¹⁴ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, 161.

¹¹⁵ Edward Carpenter, 'The One Foundation' in *The Comrade* (April, 1904), 154. In Carpenter Collection, Reel 38.

¹¹⁶ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, 5.

¹¹⁷ Letter dated 23 January, 1892, in *Letters and Papers*, 653.

Lowes Dickinson approached this youthful experience in a light-hearted manner, treating it as a kind of experimental rite of passage for an eager new graduate.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, he retained a belief in the merits of the simpler routine of ancient industry. He saw work in the modern age existing as an odious necessity and contrasted it with China's ancient methods, which allowed time to 'turn our gaze up to the eternal stars'.¹¹⁹ Thus the 'simple life' proved an attractive ideal, if not reality.

As we saw in Chapter 1, such ideas of the simple life were not just expounded by Carpenter. Thus part of the attraction of this variety of paganism came about by the same mechanism of social dissatisfaction that called socialism to the fore. However, in pagan visions a mystic process facilitating the realisation of the social calling lay at its heart. This two-fold nature can be seen in the arguments employed against ornamentation in homes. Carpenter believed that ornamentation trapped people in an unproductive vicious circle of buying and cleaning new things.¹²⁰ Hewlett agreed that happiness came from having as little as possible rather than as much and sold most of his books seeing book collecting as foppery. He called for 'Poverty, Love and England' where he believed the institution of the former would result in the triumph of the latter two.¹²¹ Carpenter took this further, arguing that the clearance of ornamentation was not just about the economic struggle but a conscious attempt to clear away encumbrances and the accumulation of meaningless tradition, and to free the body and spirit for things in life which really mattered. Lowes Dickinson argued in a similar vein stating that first the house needs to be set straight and only then can we go on and fill it with beautiful things.¹²² Therefore, despite the definite links to socialism, underlying this brand of paganism were different, more mystic ideas.

Carpenter argued that in order to recapture physical and emotional purity, men must regulate their diet. He began experimenting with vegetarianism in 1879. He adopted a frugal diet at Millthorpe and by 1899 wrote that through vegetarianism he now enjoyed infinitely better health.¹²³ He believed that the killing of animals showed a cruel heart and

¹¹⁸ *Autobiography*, 69-72.

¹¹⁹ Lowes Dickinson, *John Chinaman*, 28.

¹²⁰ Carpenter, *England's Ideal*, 87-9.

¹²¹ Maurice Hewlett, *In a Green Shade* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1920), xi-xii.

¹²² E.M. Forster, *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* (London: Edward Arnold, 1934), 114.

¹²³ Carpenter, *Days and Dreams*, 100.

went against the highly prized maxims of love and sympathy. Arguing that eating meat goes against the natural order of man's unity with animals, he asserted that by remaining carnivores the inauguration of the new society could not come forth. Carpenter's friend and Eton master, Henry Salt, believed similarly and devoted an entire work to the cause, essentially asserting, 'vegetarianism is no more and no less than an essential part in the highly complex engine which is to shape the fabric of a new social structure, an engine which will not work if a single screw be missing'.¹²⁴ Carpenter's ideas on vegetarianism were also similar to and influenced by the ideas of the exponents of esoteric Christianity, Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland.¹²⁵ Kingsford wrote extensively of the need for vegetarianism as an essential step towards perfection. She claimed that the human anatomy shows that humans were intended to be fruit and herb eaters, and that meat acts as a stimulant impairing mental faculties. She believed that the first outcome of the fall was the shedding of blood and flesh-eating and so to restore paradise humans need to be reunited in the harmony of nature and will of God of old. Like Carpenter, she argued that flesh-eating was subversive to humanity because it went against principles of justice and mercy which are the life-blood of souls.¹²⁶ This similarity of opinion between Carpenter and his friends, and esoteric Christianity, shows that the attraction of paganism must have been more than a mere subsection of socialist longing. Kingsford placed great importance on the ancients, arguing that in the most glorious periods of ancient Greece and Rome men, who were both soldiers and heroes, lived only on 'simple vegetable food, rye meal, fruits and milk' and emphasising that the most luminous minds of the ancient world such as Plutarch, Socrates, Seneca, and Pythagoras did not eat meat.¹²⁷ Carpenter viewed the ancients in a similar fashion. Indeed, in advocating vegetarianism, Carpenter was imitating Pythagoras and his 'pure community', as well as mystic Orphic sects who

¹²⁴ Henry Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism* (London: Ideal Publishing Union, 1899), 11.

¹²⁵ In his small 'simplified' personal library, Carpenter kept a copy of Kingsford's *The Perfect Way in Diet*. (Edward Carpenter's Library, Carpenter Collection). Carpenter and Maitland both addressed the Humanitarian League on the subject of vivisection. Their addresses were published together to comprise the fifty-four page pamphlet, *Vivisection. By Edward Carpenter and Edward Maitland. Two Addresses given before the Humanitarian League* (London: W. Reeves, 1893).

¹²⁶ See Anna Kingsford, *The Perfect Way in Diet* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Co., 1881); Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland, *The Credo of Christendom and Other Addresses on Esoteric Christianity* (Montana: Kessinger Publishing Company, 1915), 57-80.

¹²⁷ Kingsford, *Perfect Way*, 18; 118.

believed that the body needed to be purified through abstention in order to commune with the divine.

Dress reform was another radical trend in Edwardian England and Carpenter received many dress reform visitors to Millthorpe. He agreed with them that dress was a barrier between human relations but he also saw dress reform as more than social. He considered shoes to be 'leather coffins' and instead wore only sandals, believing them symbols of 'a return to the more primitive indispensable and universal part of ones self'.¹²⁸ Sandals became one of his trademarks and he sent pairs upon order to many of his friends. Jefferies similarly believed that the modern shoe existed as 'symbols of our dirty macadamised times' and contrasted it with the ancient Greek naked foot or sandal, which was 'open, free, unrestrained'.¹²⁹ Carpenter was in favour of minimum clothing and believed that men needed, at most, only three garments - a woollen shirt, coat and trousers.¹³⁰ This was part and parcel of his aim to remove the things between man and Nature in order to achieve contact with the mystical world order. Indeed, his true belief was in nudity, but for his present purposes it was, he wrote, in 'such degree of nudity as we can reasonably attain'.¹³¹ This is not without significance: he realised that he could not call for a nude society, at least not straightaway, and he attempted to curtail his exhortations in order to preserve, in Victorian and Edwardian eyes, a modicum of decency.

In examining the lifestyle employed by Carpenter, it is important to recognise that not all was on the side of the minimal and ascetic. There was also strong emphasis on actively delighting in life in the now. Escaping from civilisation and in an attempt to commune with the whole as in ancient times, Carpenter's daily life revolved around 'sunshine and sunbaths'. In his letters to Kate Salt, wife of Henry Salt, he wrote of his having a sunbath every morning before breakfast.¹³² In *Holmesfield Wood* he expressed how 'sometimes when naked (in the woods or at night in the open star) I dance for mere

¹²⁸ Edward Carpenter, 'The Return to Nature', *The Humanitarian* (September 1896), repr. in *Angels' Wings*, 243-8, 247-8.

¹²⁹ Richard Jefferies, *Restless Human Hearts* (1874); cited in Edward Thomas, *Richard Jefferies: His Life and Work* (London: Hutchinson, 1909), 100.

¹³⁰ Carpenter, *England's Ideal*, 93-4.

¹³¹ Edward Carpenter, *The Story of My Books* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1916), 15.

¹³² Letter to Kate Salt, 28 July 1900, Carpenter Collection, MSS 354-69.

joy'.¹³³ As a lifestyle suspended in the modern world, the return to nature was imbued with a force of redemption and renewal. Indeed, communion with nature was often seen as the way to a better age in its own right.

The 'nature writers', most notably Richard Jefferies and Edward Thomas, wanted man to 'get back to nature' and compounded ideas about the regenerative powers of nature. Jefferies believed that man is to do with nature and so should not shut himself away artificially in a house. In *Bevis* (1881), Jefferies depicted the vitality of the outdoors, such that the two boys of the story 'bathed in air and sunbeam, and gathered years of health like flowers from the field'.¹³⁴ In his highly personal work, *The Story of My Heart* (1883), Jefferies asserted a desire to rid society of the pageantry of wealth. He hoped that if everyone did something towards the end of helping future man enjoy greater fullness of life, within three generations marked advances could be made. Considering his ideal future he wrote,

I hope succeeding generations will be able to be idle. I hope that nine-tenths of their time will be leisure time; that they may enjoy their days, and the earth, and the beauty of this beautiful world; that they may dance and sing, and eat and drink. I will work towards that end with all my heart.¹³⁵

Thomas similarly, in the face of a rapidly developing urban industrial society, idealised the natural world.¹³⁶ In 1911 he began experimenting with vegetarianism and in a letter to a friend wrote of his 'bathing to excess'.¹³⁷ His description of a forest reveals a religious appreciation of nature:

With its lofty roof and the mysterious flashes of light in the foliated clerestory, with its shapely boles in cluster and colonnade, and the glimpses of bright white sky that came and went among the leaves, the forest had a real likeness to a temple. Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind' and passages of Adonais were the ediscenda of our devotions.¹³⁸

Thomas suffered from the frustration of possessing no personal fortune and so although he would have loved to purchase a farm and live fully as an open-air naturalist, he was

¹³³ Manuscript for *Holmesfield Wood*, 9 March 1889, Carpenter Collection, MSS 44.

¹³⁴ Richard Jefferies, *Bevis: The Story of a Boy*, 2 vols. (London: Sampson Low, Marsden, Searle, 1881), I, 69.

¹³⁵ Jefferies, *Story of My Heart*, 129; 143.

¹³⁶ Stated most frankly in a letter dated 8 March 1911 in *Edward Thomas: Selected Letters*, ed. R. George Thomas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 62.

¹³⁷ *Edward Thomas: Selected Letters*, 61.

forced to undertaking writing projects, many of which held little interest but at least brought in some money. Nevertheless, he still thought of himself as primarily pagan. Although nowhere in his published material does he refer to himself as such, his good friend and fellow poet, Eleanor Farjeon, had in her possession a scribbled chart that Thomas had compiled one evening, in which he awarded marks out of ten to himself and his friends on their various attributes.¹³⁹ Central to the chart were pitted the columns 'Paganism' and 'Christianity', the former with the positive plus sign, the latter with the negative minus. Thomas gave himself nine out of ten for paganism and of his eleven other friends ranked on the chart, believed three others to be worthy of nine out of ten and four others of eight. Although he did not define paganism in the chart, it is clearly the antithesis of Christianity and goes alongside the other positive qualities listed in the chart: pride, adaptability, joie de vive, fire, guilt, will; and against the other negative qualities: vanity and ostentation. What is also notable is that he does not seem to equate paganism with joie de vive, for which he only awards himself three and a half out of ten. Limitations of the sources leave us in doubt as to whether Thomas's low mark for this quality detracted from his paganism or not. In Thomas's *In Pursuit of Spring* (1914) the 'new paganism' sprang to the narrator's mind when the character, the 'Other Man', starts singing a 'ribald song' at the top of his voice as they speed through the countryside. This might indeed seem to equate joie de vive with his connotations of paganism; however, the 'Other Man' is also described as a nature writer who lives only on monkey nuts and brown bread, which points to a more ascetic side of his supposed paganism. Thomas goes on to hint at the confusion of images of paganism in the modern age: the Other Man, describes an approaching village as a 'godless place', which the narrator, on the basis of the Other Man's manner, supposes to mean the lack of Apollo, Dionysus, or Aphrodite, only to discover that in fact he had meant no one attended church.¹⁴⁰ For Thomas then, paganism appears largely as something religious; habits and behaviour may give intimations of paganism but paganism is essentially a matter of faith.

¹³⁸ Edward Thomas, 'Broken Memories' in *Rose Acre Papers* (London: Duckworth, 1910), 164-74.

¹³⁹ Printed in Eleanor Farjeon, *Edward Thomas The Last Four Years: Book 1 of The Memoirs of Eleanor Farjeon* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 71.

¹⁴⁰ Edward Thomas, *In Pursuit of Spring* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1914), 219-31.

Emphasis on nature, and the handling of the natural world, by sympathetic nature writers adds an escapist element to this variety of paganism. Although Millthorpe was not the finished product for Carpenter, by its very presence, as an alternative way of life, it functioned as an escape from modern society. Inherent within such ideas is a strong element of embodied romance. This can be clearly seen in the occupation and perception of bathing. Carpenter regularly bathed outside in a stream by his farm and encouraged others to do likewise. Lowes Dickinson commented on the existence and popularity of nude out-of-doors bathing at Cambridge, as pioneered by the secretary of the swimming club, Oscar Browning.¹⁴¹ Lowes Dickinson himself regularly bathed. However, it must be stressed that this was not undertaken with an aim to shock. Lowes Dickinson was forced to hide, cold and wet, in the reeds for hours while a group of students taking a punt trip enjoyed the afternoon on the river, because he did not want to be exposed.¹⁴² Carpenter argued that bathing represented the pleasant consciousness of those who are unashamed and the 'loving union and uncoveredness of Man and Nature'.¹⁴³ Thus Carpenter's friend and writer, Havelock Ellis, summed up 'to bathe was more than to bathe. It is a rite of which physical delight is a symbol of the spiritual significance of an act of communion with Nature, to be shared up with one's best experiences of Fine Living'.¹⁴⁴ Imbued with symbolism, it was not the act of bathing that was so romantic, as the spiritual loftiness associated with it; the romance sprang from perceptions of the educated mind.

Romantic notions of bathing were linked to recollections of the Greeks. Famous images, such as Frederick Leighton's 'Bath of Psyche' (1890), and work by anthropologists, such as Jane Ellen Harrison, cemented notions that nude bathing and similar past-times were the tribute of the Greeks. In literature, Greek images were frequently used to romantically describe bathing. In *The Dewy Morn* (1884), Jefferies described the bathing of his heroine Felise as if she had been going to an ancient temple:

...with them [water, light, and air] she felt her own life, she knew her own full existence. Like this the maidens of ancient Greece sang to the stream when they filled their urns. Even Socrates the wisest sat pondering in reverence by the stream. Felise was full of the delicious

¹⁴¹ *Autobiography*, 64.

¹⁴² Jones, *Rupert Brooke*, 186.

¹⁴³ 'As the Greeks Dreamed' in Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, 385-6.

¹⁴⁴ Entry for 24 September 1913 in Havelock Ellis, *Impressions and Comments* (London: Constable, 1914).

influence of the great powers of nature. This susceptibility rendered her love so rich and deep.¹⁴⁵

Such romantic notions permeated into actual experience. Farjeon recalled her first night in the open under the guidance of suffragette, Olive Hockin. In the morning they bathed outdoors and, for Farjeon, Hockin became Diana. They spotted a flat stone in the middle of the lake and on investigation Hockin declared 'it's a crown of wild parsley, Godwin [Baynes] has been sacrificing to the deity'. Next Farjeon was terrified because she heard a pack of hounds tearing towards her. Having escaped unscathed, the whole experience left her feeling elated and as if she had taken part in a Greek myth.¹⁴⁶ Thus bathing was linked to a romantic conception of paganism. Of course, this conception of bathing makes it less than truly pagan rather than more, because the ancient pagans did not consciously attach romantic notions to it. Rather than aiming to emulate the innocence of George Merrill, here pagan ideas specifically drew on the modern educated mind and were attractive to that mind precisely because of imposed romantic symbolism.

Nature writers nurtured romantic images of paganism by expressing their overall delight in the natural world through classical imagery. Although many of these descriptions are literary devices enabling more enchanting prose, such depictions helped to shape images of paganism. In 'Exiles at Play' Thomas describes sad and exiled Greek gods who are forgotten by man, woeful at their shunning, and spend their time acting out the agonies of Euripides in an attempt to remember the true passions of man.¹⁴⁷ Thus he sets their grief caused by the modern world alongside his own. In *The Heart of England*, a book loosely based on Thomas's travels through rural England, many characters he encounters remind him of the Greeks; for example, the carter was 'at least a Phaeton, a son of Apollo, if not Apollo himself'.¹⁴⁸ In 'Crossroads', Thomas longs for a statue of Demeter to complete the rural landscape so that men 'might bow and lay down something of his burden' and she could become at home and blithe again.¹⁴⁹ In 'The Passing of Pan'

¹⁴⁵ Richard Jefferies, *The Dewy Morn* (London: R. Bentley and Son, 1884; repr., London: Wildwood House, 1982), 66. Also note the more sexually charged description of Felise bathing, 4-5. See Chapter 4 of this thesis for discussion of bathing and sexuality.

¹⁴⁶ Farjeon, *Edward Thomas*, 33-4. The myth referred to is undoubtedly the one told in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*.

¹⁴⁷ Thomas, 'Exiles at Play' in *Rose Acre Papers*, 9-25.

¹⁴⁸ Edward Thomas, *The Heart of England* (London: J.M. Dent and Co, 1906), 104.

¹⁴⁹ Edward Thomas, 'Crossroads' in *The South Country* (London: J. M. Dent and Co, 1909).

Thomas depicts a young boy-Pan figure whom, tormented on the edge of society and intoxicated by modern food, comes to resemble a drug addict and eventually passes into an eternal sleep. In the story, Thomas also describes a 'Godlike woman' who is a goddess beyond even the gods, and who lives deep in the forest enthroned in immortality so that 'not even the gods have often seen her. We know only her thresholds. Around that throne is peace, whom thou knowest not'.¹⁵⁰ Thomas thus gives pride of place to the feminine in nature.

The poetic depiction of the earth as a great goddess began in the modern era with Shelley.¹⁵¹ Meredith followed and developed this tradition and stands at the forefront of Victorian depictions of an all-mighty goddess. In 'Ode to the Spirit of the Earth at Autumn', he wrote

And O, green bounteous Earth!
Bacchante Mother! stern to those
Who live not in thy heart of mirth;
Death shall I shrink from, loving thee?
Into the breast that gives the rose,
Shall I with shuddering fall?¹⁵²

He was acutely aware of a world containing both good and evil, and wrote of fleshly sin being against the Mother. Intrinsic in this was the assertion,

She being Spirit in her clods,
Footway to the God of Gods.
Then for you are pleasures pure,
Sureties as the stars are sure.¹⁵³

By living close to the goddess men could learn her secrets and enter into a fuller life. Thus, it can be seen that nature writing contributed to images of paganism of this variety, expressing delight at a life out-of-doors, in communion with nature, and similar to that of the ancient pagans.

¹⁵⁰ In Thomas, *Rose Acre Papers*, 26-47.

¹⁵¹ See 'Song of Proserpine' (1820) cited in Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, 34.

¹⁵² Meredith, 'Ode to the Spirit of Earth in Autumn' in *Modern Love and Poems of the English Roadside with Poems and Ballads* (1862); repr. in *Poems of George Meredith*, I. 193-200.

¹⁵³ Meredith, 'The Woods of Westermain' in *Joy of Earth* (1883) repr. in *Poems of George Meredith*, I. 207-21.

In relation to the way of life and expressions of nature we have discussed, it is interesting to examine the case of Rupert Brooke. In 1911 Virginia Woolf (nee Stephens) first referred to Brooke and his circle of friends as the 'neo-pagans'.¹⁵⁴ More recently, Paul Delany employed the word in the title of his academic book about the group.¹⁵⁵ Let us assess then, the validity of the term. Brooke was essentially a product of the next generation, and so grew up in an intellectual world already strongly influenced by the likes of Carpenter, Whitman and Meredith. Many in Brooke's circle had attended the progressive school, Bedales, whose methods under J.H. Badley were strongly influenced by Carpenter. Brooke himself did not have such a progressive upbringing, but in his early adulthood he attended Fabian and Fellowship of the New Life summer schools. These schools were heavily influenced by Carpenter and gave their students a summer of vegetarian diet and outdoor activities. The influence of the ancients can be seen in the Fellowship of New Life, set up by Thomas Davidson and Percival Chubb, which aimed at the reinstatement of 'the Pythagorean, the Socratic, or Platonic, or the Epicurean brotherhoods'.¹⁵⁶ However, these schools did not intend to set up an alternative way of life. They instead functioned with the aim of invigorating and cultivating its well-to-do students before sending them back to the 'real world' where they were expected to become politicians or attain to other high echelons of society.

Brooke and his circle continued the outdoors lifestyle outside of these schools. On 25th March 1909 Brooke wrote to Erica Cotterill of his early experimentation:

I am leading the healthy life. I rise early, twist myself about on a kind of pulley that is supposed to make my chest immense (but doesn't), eat no meat, wear very little, do not part my hair, take frequent cold baths, work ten hours a day, and rush madly about the mountains in flannels and rainstorms for hours. I am surprisingly cheerful about it – it is all part of my scheme of returning to nature.¹⁵⁷

Over the next few years Brooke and his friends undertook a lifestyle of naked bathing, primitive clothing, simple vegetarian food, and camping, earning the early nickname

¹⁵⁴ First used in letter to Clive Bell, 18 April 1911, in *The Flight of the Mind: The Letters of Virginia Woolf Vol. 1 1888-1912*, ed. Nigel Nicholson (London: Hogarth Press, 1975), 460. The 'neo-pagan' circle of friends is usually taken to mean, Brooke, Jacques Raverat, Gwen Raverat, Ka Cox, Justin Brooke, and the four Olivier sisters – Margery, Daphne, Noel, and Brynhild.

¹⁵⁵ Delany, *Neo-Pagans*.

¹⁵⁶ Delavenay, *Lawrence and Carpenter*, 16.

¹⁵⁷ *The Letters of Rupert Brooke*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), 159.

'dew dabblers'. Nature was seen as a prescription for any ailment and when it was time for Brooke to sit the Tripos at Cambridge he declared that he did not care if he failed for 'I know more than they...I am the king of infinite glories'.¹⁵⁸ Brooke viewed this life as imbued with much romance. He made a trip to Cornwall to see the Olivier sisters, which no one save a few close friends knew he was undertaking, and wrote about it in mysterious terms, calling it his days in 'Arcady'.¹⁵⁹ He apparently spent this time dancing through the forest and, upon meeting an old woman, told her that 'the Earth was crowned with wild flowers and dancing down the violet ways of Spring: that Christ had died and Pan was risen...as a matter of fact I believe I said Hullo! isn't it rippin' weather?'.¹⁶⁰ It seems that he was indeed aware of his love of dramatising the situation.

Woolf appears to have applied the term 'neo-pagan' half-mockingly to imply a pseudo, pretend, or frivolous paganism. In writing of her own ambitions for a bout of paganism she wrote that her intention was 'to throw myself into youth, sunshine, nature, primitive art. Cakes with sugar on top, love, lust, paganism, general bawdiness'.¹⁶¹ This touches on the paganism of our second variety, 'decadent' paganism; however, we cannot categorise the 'neo-paganism' of Brooke as such. Brooke may have loved to annoy his parents by playing tennis barefoot as part of his return to nature, or by not wearing a tie to dinner, but he and his group were in reality quite responsible.¹⁶² In terms of morality, they largely conformed to the norms of the day. The naked bathing of the male and female friends was not accompanied by sexual encounters and so it was not a paganism of free love.¹⁶³ Nevertheless, Brooke's paganism did contain frivolity and was not as serious as Carpenter's way of life. Brooke's paganism can perhaps be seen as a romantic summer-sunshine paganism, riding on the buoyancy of youth and privileged socio-economic position. Brooke was attracted to the Greek spirit but used it more for its romance than as a serious attempt to implement it in society. He imagined Daphne Olivier as Diana and Margery Olivier as a woodland goddess.¹⁶⁴ In one of his most

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 162.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹⁶¹ *Flight of the Mind*, 461.

¹⁶² *Letters of Rupert Brooke*, 175.

¹⁶³ See letter dated May 1911; cited in Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf. A Biography*, 2 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1972), I. 173.

¹⁶⁴ *Letters of Rupert Brooke*, 221.

famous poems, 'The Old Vicarage, Granchester', he wrote that fauns could still be seen and Pan's pipes heard by 'clever modern men'.¹⁶⁵ At Lulworth Cove in 1910, pride of place was given to the evening euphoric readings of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*.¹⁶⁶ However, on holiday in Germany, Brooke eagerly attended a 'Bacchus-Fest', in which everyone dressed, scantily clad, as Greeks and many had sexual experiences. Brooke felt this was 'trying Greek' but wrote that he could not totally submerge himself in it because he felt too conscious and intellectual.¹⁶⁷ This highlights both Brooke's responsibility and his inability to believe the romance completely.

The same can be seen when examining Brooke's paganism from the standpoint of a religion. His most recent biographer, Nigel Jones, commented that the group's conduct tended to lean towards that of a mystical nature cult.¹⁶⁸ Brooke was not Christian and was outraged at the 'blasphemes of Anglicanism' said at Swinburne's funeral.¹⁶⁹ It seems that he favoured the earth and sun alternatives as exemplified in the ancient world. In letters exchanged between Jacques Raverat and Ka Cox in 1910, we can see that rituals were discussed and fire, water, crystals, song, and dance assumed importance. Raverat noted that they 'talked a great deal of the urgency of some kind of ritual, mystery, initiation, symbolism and...planned a great litany of the four elements'. However, ultimately they concluded that they felt too rational and self-conscious to whole-heartedly believe in the importance of such things.¹⁷⁰ Writing after World War I, after Brooke had died and the other friends had gone their separate ways, Gwen Raverat described to Woolf, 'it doesn't seem to have been a really successful religion, though it was very good fun while it lasted'.¹⁷¹ The example of Brooke and his circle reveals a form of paganism that was wrapped up in a specifically summer lifestyle with emphasis on youth. They delighted in a life out-of-doors and in escape from society, but they neither fully believed in it as a religion, nor fully embraced it as a way of life. With too much emphasis on youthful romance and too little emphasis on actual substance, in the end, as they grew older, they

¹⁶⁵ 'The Old Vicarage, Granchester' (1912) repr., Rupert Brooke, *1914 & Other Poems* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1915).

¹⁶⁶ Delany, *Neo-Pagans*, xv; 108.

¹⁶⁷ *Letters of Rupert Brooke*, 282.

¹⁶⁸ Jones, *Rupert Brooke*, 135.

¹⁶⁹ *Letters of Rupert Brooke*, 166; 168.

¹⁷⁰ Delany, *Neo-Pagans*, 101.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 237.

experienced a 'sobering up'. Thus the experience of the Brooke circle is important to consider, but perhaps plays less of a part in Edwardian paganism than Woolf, and Delany, have imagined. Youth is a temporal experience that inevitably leaves the individual; however, let us next turn to a disposition that, when apparent, remains throughout life.

As we have seen, Carpenter's vision was attractive because of its inclusive eclecticism.¹⁷² However, returning to the specific question of what they were getting out of paganism, we must address the place and importance of homosexuality. The 'back-to-the-land' movement was based on socialist ideas for communal living in the countryside, which idealised the way of the medieval guilds. In recognising the issue of homosexuality, we can understand why some preferred the pagan ideal to the medieval ideal and conversely why the pagan ideal was not as popular as, and indeed more radical than, the medieval ideal. It is notable that the majority of the key figures in the development of this variety of paganism were homosexual. Carpenter was actively homosexual; Lowes Dickinson did not engage fully in physical homosexual relationships but he did have four male lovers in his lifetime; and Symonds was in an unfulfilling marriage and homosexual in temperament. For homosexuals, a large part of the appeal of Carpenter's work was the honour he gave to feelings normally seen as sinful. The letters of Edward Lewis repeatedly expressed to Carpenter his wish to 'find a George'¹⁷³ and it is likely that his conversion to Carpenter's teachings may have been due to his homosexuality, previously suppressed as a cleric, finally receiving positive endorsement. Similarly, Charles Ashbee was attracted to Carpenter's ideas, due to his homosexual tendencies. In 1902 he led 150 people out of London to the Cotswolds; some of the systems he set up were based on medieval guilds but he was primarily influenced by Carpenter's emphasis on comradeship and homosexual love as the motor of social construction.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² See, for example, Forster's 'Terminal Note' (1960) in which he wrote that Carpenter 'for a short time seemed to hold the key for every trouble'. In E.M. Forster, *Maurice* (London: Edward Arnold, 1971), 235.

¹⁷³ See letters of Edward Lewis to Edward Carpenter dated 9 and 28 May 1904, Carpenter Collection, MSS 386-227; 386-228.

¹⁷⁴ Fiona MacCarthy, *The Simple Life: C.R. Ashbee in the Cotswolds* (London: Lund Humphries, 1981), 17-18.

The connection of all of this to ancient Greece is, of course, that Greece was a society that accepted and encouraged homosexuality. At a time in England when homosexuality was far from acceptable, ancient Greece could thus be appealed to as an attractive form of civilisation for those with homosexual instincts. Ancient Greece was often associated with homosexual awakenings. Symonds wrote in his journals that he used to look for hours at a picture of the Praxitelean Cupid sculpture and how, when his schoolteacher read the *Iliad*, it induced potent visions of young manhood.¹⁷⁵ Havelock Ellis's account of Symonds's sexual development recorded that a decisive development occurred when Symonds, aged eighteen, read Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* and felt 'a new world opened, and...that his own nature had been revealed'.¹⁷⁶ Elsewhere Symonds stated that henceforth he understood that 'all my soul was lodged in Hellas'.¹⁷⁷ Similarly, in Forster's book, *Maurice*, a novel directly inspired by his visit to Millthorpe in 1912 but deemed too radical to be published until 1971¹⁷⁸, it is the reading of Plato that awakens homosexual feelings in Maurice. Lowes Dickinson also understood Plato's works as a revelation but for him the discovery came in adulthood in 1888:

Then one evening, in a talk with a student of Classics, I discovered that the Greek love, as I had read of it in Plato, was a continuous and still existing fact. It seems to me, now, odd that this should have been a discovery, and that I should really have supposed that Plato was describing an exceptional Greek phenomenon. But, odd as it may seem, though I was enthusiastic for Plato, it was as a philosopher and mystic, not as a lover; and I had not grasped the real motives from which dialogues like the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* sprang.¹⁷⁹

Lowes Dickinson's initial lack of perception was not uncommon. Victorian society at large tried to ignore or repudiate the homosexual element in ancient Greece. The Oxford don, Benjamin Jowett, probably the most important scholar of Plato in the Victorian era, wrote to Symonds that Plato's homosexual allusions are merely 'figure of speech' and so argued that Plato could be read by the public with impunity. Symonds fiercely argued back that Plato's allusions are to a 'present and poignant reality' and it would be an

¹⁷⁵ Horatio F. Brown, ed. *John Addington Symonds: A Biography Compiled from his Papers and Correspondence*, 2 vols. (London: John C. Nimo, 1895), I. 48.

¹⁷⁶ Case XVII in Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex, Vol. 1 Sexual Inversion* (London: Wilson and MacMillan, 1897), repr., in *Memoirs of John Addington Symonds*, 284-8.

¹⁷⁷ Brown, ed. *Biography*, I. 48-94.

¹⁷⁸ 'Terminal Note' in Forster, *Maurice*, 235.

¹⁷⁹ *Autobiography*, 90.

anomaly in a society that detests homosexuality to hold such a work up as respectable and harmless.¹⁸⁰

When homosexuality in ancient Greece was recognised it was usually seen as a late aberration and blamed as one symptom and cause of the demise of the civilisation. A key driving force within 'responsible' paganism was to encourage mainstream opinion toward a more favourable view. The method employed to achieve this was the further sanitization of ancient Greece, with the aim of imbuing homosexuality with respectable authority. Carpenter's socialism was inseparable from a desire for the restoration and full recognition of the heroic, homosexual, friendships of Greek times. He asserted that by ignoring such things the modern world 'fling[s] on the dust-heap one of the noblest and most precious elements in human nature',¹⁸¹ and devoted a number of books, pamphlets and articles to the subject.¹⁸² Carpenter based his argument in the assertion that homosexual love in ancient Greece was 'the cradle of social chivalry and heroic life' and so ancient Greece cannot be considered or understood apart from the homosexual passion.¹⁸³ He aimed to show from the Greek model that homosexuality was 'quite instinctive and congenital, mentally and physically, and therefore twined to the very roots of individual life and practically ineradicable'.¹⁸⁴ Ellis wrote extensively and favourably about homosexuality; yet he still saw it as an organic aberration.¹⁸⁵ In contrast, Carpenter separated sexual intercourse from procreation, arguing that the prime object of sex is union. Seeing sexual relations as a model of nature, sexual intercourse could be held up as a manifestation of love and thus elevated to the spiritual plane. He also toned down his advocacy of sex, arguing that Greek sculpture shows a sense of balanced proportion, which similarly must have characterised their homosexual passion. The work of Plato was highly useful in shaping perceptions of homosexuality within sanitised images, because Plato approached homosexuality with a degree of asceticism that ruled out base

¹⁸⁰ Letter dated 1 February 1889, in *Memoirs of John Addington Symonds*, 102.

¹⁸¹ Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women* (London: Sonnenschein, 1908), 104.

¹⁸² Most notably, *Homogenic Love: and its Place in a Free Society* (Manchester: [Printed for private circulation], 1894); *Love's Coming of Age* (1896); *Iolaus: An Anthology* (London: Sonnenschein, 1902); *The Intermediate Sex* (1908); *Intermediate Types Among Primitive Folks: A Study of Social Evolution* (London: George Allen, 1914).

¹⁸³ Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex*, 72-82.

¹⁸⁴ Carpenter, *Homogenic Love*, 18.

¹⁸⁵ Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, 7 vols. (1897-1928).

and licentious indulgence. He wrote loftily of a homosexuality that could lead to a true philosophy in the mind, to the divine vision, and to the remembrance within the soul of all forms of celestial beauty.

Symonds's *A Problem in Greek Ethics* (1901) stands as perhaps the most eloquent and famous apologia for homosexuality, and scholarly study of homosexuality in Greece, written in the nineteenth century. Therein he argued that 'paiderastia' was a phenomenon of one of the most brilliant periods of human culture and, although recognising that it could have a grosser hedonistic side, existing in its pure form as a love of beauty, it is an ideal. More candidly, when discussing this work in a letter to Carpenter, he asserted that the ancient Greeks 'not only tolerated passionate comradeship, but also utilised it for high social and military purpose'.¹⁸⁶ Like Carpenter, his appeal to Greece was part of a pursuit for a new society. Symonds and Carpenter both argued against government legislation prohibiting homosexual relations. Symonds believed that England was not justified to restrict such freedom,¹⁸⁷ while Carpenter argued that all love needs to be treated with respect and relevance and should not be interfered with.¹⁸⁸ In the presentation of these arguments, both were concerned to present their work rationally and respectably. Correspondence between Symonds and Ellis dealing with their collaborative work on homosexuality, reveals a notable concern that the book should have an authoritative style; nothing too literary and flowery, but also not too austere, dissuading audience interest.¹⁸⁹ Similarly, discussing his article, 'Sex-love and its place in a Free Society' (1894), Carpenter wrote to Roger Fry, 'I agree with you that the manner in such a subject is more important almost than the matter'.¹⁹⁰ Thus with the aim of societal endorsement, homosexuality was approached in a highly considered and tactical fashion.

Carpenter employed Karl Ulrichs's terms 'Urnings' and 'Uranians' to refer to people with homosexual impulses and which was characterised by a belief of them being male bodies with female souls or female bodies with male souls. Carpenter presented

¹⁸⁶ Letter to Edward Carpenter 29 December 1892, *Letters and Papers*, 798.

¹⁸⁷ John Addington Symonds, *A Problem in Modern Ethics: Being an Inquiry into the Phenomenon of Sexual Inversion, addressed especially to Medical Psychologist and Jurists* (London: [Printed for private circulation], 1896), 126.

¹⁸⁸ Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age*, 149.

¹⁸⁹ Letter dated 22 February 1893, Symonds Collection, DS/190/31.

¹⁹⁰ Letter dated 27 February 1894, Cambridge, King's College Archive Centre, The Papers of Roger Elliot Fry, REF 3/28.

male Uranians as possessors of an instinctive artistic nature, a sensitive spirit, wavelike emotional temperament and hardihood of intellect and body; and female Uranians as possessors of a frank and free nature, masculine independence and strength, and feminine grace of form and manner.¹⁹¹ It may be mentioned here, that as a by-product of Carpenter's emphasis on homosexuality he appealed to many women. His stress on sex and love was attractive and his emphasis on the whole of society meant that women were not excluded from his vision. He wrote of a society in which men and women could be friends and lovers and he had many women friends and admirers, for example, Kate Salt, Olive Schreiner and Edith Lees. Many women felt that he possessed an intuitive sympathy towards them;¹⁹² however, he did not attempt to transcend fixed gender characteristics and paid no real attention to lesbianism.¹⁹³ Nevertheless, he did not reduce womanhood to motherhood and saw women as human beings, and at a time when women rarely got a look in, this was often enough to appeal to them.

It is important to stress that, ever the mystic, Carpenter's view of homosexuality went beyond the social and he craved for more than simply cultural acceptance. Carpenter's emphasis on the many positive assets of Uranians led him to attribute them a special role in the transition to the new paganism. In *Intermediate Types Among Primitive Folks* (1914) Carpenter traced the influence of Uranians throughout history, arguing that they were the ones who developed the superstructures in societies since they were the great leaders, whether in the form of priests, shamans, witch doctors and so forth. He listed Sappho, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar and Shakespeare as great Uranians, and in the more recent past exalted Shelley and Byron.¹⁹⁴ He also argued that the gods were often so revered precisely because of their special qualities deriving from their bisexuality and pointed to the example of Dionysus as depicted by Euripides.¹⁹⁵ He also highlighted instances of Apollo, Achilles and Hercules in female guises.¹⁹⁶ Thus,

¹⁹¹ Carpenter, *Intermediate Sex*, 7.

¹⁹² Lowes Dickinson, 'Carpenter as a Friend', 37.

¹⁹³ See Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age*.

¹⁹⁴ Carpenter, *Intermediate Sex*, 134.

¹⁹⁵ Carpenter, *Intermediate Types*, 83.

¹⁹⁶ Edward Carpenter, 'On the Connection Between Homosexuality and Divination and Importance of the Intermediate Sexes Generally in Early Civilizations' in *Revue d'ethnographie et de sociologie* (Paris, 1910), 301-316. In Carpenter Collection, Reel 38.

encapsulating more sides of nature, Uranians were seen as closer to the ideal of androgyny.

In this way, Carpenter argued that the Uranians were destined to form 'the advanced guard' of the movement to the new life.¹⁹⁷ Symonds similarly asserted, confiding his hopes in a private letter to Carpenter:

My hope has always been that eventually a new chivalry, i.e. a second elevated form of human love, will emerge and take its place for the service of mankind by the side of that other which was wrought out in the Middle Ages.¹⁹⁸

In an earlier poem, he had likewise expressed that the rise of homosexuality heralds that 'a loftier race/ Than e'er the world hath known, shall rise...The pulse of one fraternity'.¹⁹⁹ Carpenter's argument rested on the idea that the love-nature of Uranians was immense. Influenced by Plato's *Symposium*, he saw love as something very young and very sensitive, and concluded that Uranians must be well stocked with love since they are so often noted for their remarkable youthfulness.²⁰⁰ Drawing on Plato's *Phaedrus*, Carpenter asserted that love prompts the efforts of the soul to recapture the vision of the ideal world. Thus Carpenter proclaimed that the Uranian capacity for love would act as a great driving force and shape the image of the future. They would reconcile and interpret the sexes to each other and induce a form of love less exclusively sensual than the average of the day.²⁰¹ He also asserted that the Uranians of present society were already showing the first signs of the new humanity. His vision was therefore attractive to 'Uranians'; they are given the most prominent position and the time for the change appears to be now.

Carpenter's homosexual longings did not cease to remain highly contentious and sympathy for homosexuality remained on the radical fringe throughout our period of study. However, for those of homosexual temperament, it held the key to an extremely instinctual attraction to paganism. Lowes Dickinson proclaimed that his own homosexual inclinations, 'have struck deep into my intellectual and spiritual life. They have made me

¹⁹⁷ Carpenter, *Intermediate Sex*, 116.

¹⁹⁸ Letter dated 29 December 1892, in *Letters and Papers*, 799.

¹⁹⁹ John Addington Symonds, 'A Vista' in *New and Old: A Volume of Verse* (London: Smith, Elder, 1880), 225.

²⁰⁰ Carpenter, *Intermediate Sex*, 13-16.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 116.

what I am'.²⁰² In his notebook, Carpenter described his desire for the new religion to be 'all accepting'.²⁰³ This turn of phrase is interesting since it perhaps reveals the very personal desire at the heart of all his work. The modern scholar, Brian Reade, has accused Symonds of seeing the word 'Arcadian' to mean homosexual and little else.²⁰⁴ Similarly, P.J. Holliday has argued that Symonds's appeal to ancient Greece was a utopian quest for a society which allowed homosexuality.²⁰⁵ Indeed, Symonds appears to have rested his whole judgement of Whitman on Whitman's attitude to homosexuality.²⁰⁶ It would be an overstatement to suggest that homosexuality is at the root of this variety of paganism, but it certainly acted as a powerful attractant and gave the desire for paganism a personally intrinsic element. Fundamentally, emphasis on the instinctual quality of homosexual feelings withdrew any linear teleology and could produce a sentiment of timeless affiliation to paganism.

Therefore, although paganism was attractive because of a belief that change was already beginning and the new era not far off, the appeal to paganism was also imbued with an attractive timeless element. Paganism was used in such a way that rather than being a distant and dusty set of ancient beliefs, it could transcend the boundary of epochs and appeal directly to man himself. This timeless element is linked to conceptions of Greece the modern day country. Travels in the Mediterranean were popular at this time; however, as the historian John Pemble has convincingly argued, the Mediterranean was denied a life of its own. A belief in English supremacy and the exclusion of the human element combined with preconceived ideas in mounds of travellers' lore. Travels to Greece and Italy were not seen as geographical travels but more a journey into the natural state of mankind and a rediscovery of his instinctual humanity.²⁰⁷ When Hewlett visited Greece he described it as 'heavenly' and 'intoxicating'; saw the woods as 'frugal, like all

²⁰² G. Lowes Dickinson, 'Privatissimum: A Chapter in my Autobiography', GLD 1/4.

²⁰³ Notebook (1909), Carpenter Collection, MSS 278.

²⁰⁴ Brian Reade, ed. *Sexual Heretics: Male Homosexuality in English Literature From 1850-1900* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), 8.

²⁰⁵ Holliday, 'Symonds and the Model of Ancient Greece', 97-8.

²⁰⁶ Letter dated 6 May 1890, Symonds Collection, DM/109/28.

²⁰⁷ John Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

Greek beauty'; and felt that he had been placed 'in Arcadia with all the Greek Gods'.²⁰⁸ Symonds wrote that when in Greece he felt 'pure light, serenity, harmony, balance, definition, nothing too large, too crushing, but all human and beautiful, and fit for cradle of free logos'.²⁰⁹ Elsewhere he stated that Greece was in 'perpetual sunshine, perpetual ease'.²¹⁰ Thus Greek climate and landscape were appreciated as eternal expressions of all that was aesthetically Greek. In the Mediterranean, one could feel close to paganism and, to a degree, appealing to the senses could actually experience it.

Travels outside of the Mediterranean could often function in the same way. On visiting the islands of the South Pacific in 1913, Rupert Brooke described them as 'heaven on earth, the ideal life, little work, dancing, singing and eating, naked people incredible loveliness, perfect manner, and immense kindliness, a divine tropic climate, and intoxicating beauty of scenery'. For him they contained 'hints of a pre-Lethean life, of men' and 'makes one inclined to believe in the Christian idea that we've come down since the beginning of time, not up'.²¹¹ Lowes Dickinson extended the aesthetic ideal of Hellenism to the East. He found China to be 'gay, friendly, beautiful, sane, Hellenic, choice, human'. In Japan, he was constantly reminded of ancient Greece. Their costumes and bare arms and legs seemed to him to be 'Hellenic' and he ascribed 'the most Hellenic he ever saw' to 'a group of Japanese youths practicing jiu-jitsu under the trees of a temple garden, or by moonlight on the seashore'.²¹² He saw the ideal of a life in nature strongly apparent in the East and he declared of Japan 'this I call civilisation! I just love it';²¹³ however, this is not to say he believed it ahead of the West in terms of evolutionary development. He explained his belief:

The East will follow the West not go round it, on its way to a higher phase of civilisation. I believe that the renewal of art, of contemplation, of religion, will arise in the West of its own impulse; and that the East will lose what remains of its achievement in these directions and become as 'materialistic' (to use the word) as the West, before it can recover a new and genuine spiritual life.²¹⁴

²⁰⁸ 'Diary of Maurice Hewlett in Greece 1914' in *Letters of Maurice Hewlett*, 260-90, 260; 262.

²⁰⁹ Brown, ed. *Biography*, II. 87.

²¹⁰ Symonds, *Greek Poets*, I. 400.

²¹¹ *Letters of Rupert Brooke*, 554-67.

²¹² G. Lowes Dickinson, *An Essay of the Civilisations of India, China and Japan* (1913) repr. in *John Chinaman*, 45-87, 76.

²¹³ *Autobiography*, 187.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

Therefore the East too was denied a life of its own, seen to exist as a living fossil defined by concepts of ancient Mediterranean and modern Western civilisation. Nevertheless, this timeless essence, if felt, made paganism all the more alluring.

In an unpublished and unfinished manuscript, 'I The Mediterranean', Lowes Dickinson discussed perceptions of the Mediterranean by way of dialogue between two characters, Coryat and Audubon, on a Mediterranean cruise.²¹⁵ Audubon sees the cruise boat as merely a floating hotel and so, with its set dinners and cosmopolitan modern dress, believes them not to be in the Mediterranean at all. Conversely, Coryat is a romantic who feels that it is only too appropriate to read Homer onboard, sees the Mediterranean peopled by the ships of Odysseus, and in a night vision imagines their boat speeding back in time where 'all legend and all history crowded in'. Coryat tries to show Audubon that what he feels is the real Mediterranean, but he is saddened because Audubon is too distracted by 'elevenesses' to see it.²¹⁶ We remain unsure of how Lowes Dickinson intended the dialogue to end but it is notable that for both speakers the Mediterranean was conceived as a state of being, with the potential to be experienced.²¹⁷ On visiting the Acropolis of Athens himself, Lowes Dickinson felt that it was 'one of the most overwhelming sensations I have ever had; and so it must have been for many others...For suddenly the dead came alive'.²¹⁸ He described his first visit to Italy as similarly intoxicating, and in his autobiography recollected,

Then, as often before and later, the illusion possessed me that somehow life might, and could, be something far more pleasurable and passionate than it ever seemed to be to modern men...an antiquity that was also an ideal and a provocation brooded over the place. I felt something still of that when I was last in Rome, and perhaps should feel it even now.²¹⁹

Thus for Lowes Dickinson, in Italy the 'door for a moment swung ajar' and in Greece his 'dulled senses came to life' and 'it was like hearing music at last played in tune'.²²⁰ Carpenter wrote of his travels in a similar fashion. On seeing Greek sculptures 'under that

²¹⁵ His original literary executor, E.M. Forster, considered it possibly to be sequel to *A Modern Symposium*, since it contained two of its characters; thus he dated it as post 1906, GLD 1/9 Pencil annotation.

²¹⁶ These sentiments are the same as Coryat's in *A Modern Symposium*, 121: 'literature and art of the past can never be dead. It's the flask where the geni of life is imprisoned; you've only got to open it and the life is yours. And what life!'

²¹⁷ 'I The Mediterranean', GLD 1/9.

²¹⁸ Lowes Dickinson, *Contribution of Ancient Greece*, 89.

²¹⁹ *Autobiography*, 138.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 162-3.

Southern sky' he was given a 'poetic impulse which I could not...have surmised from broken marble seen in a London fog'.²²¹ And it was, of course, his travels to Italy that initially gave him inspiration and provided him with the seeds of a new life.²²² Travels to the South could often function more as a mission than a holiday. As something that could be experienced, they could evoke a feeling of religious revelation and inspiration. For many, paganism was already associated with sexual awakening and so we can perhaps see religious awakening as an extension of this psychological attraction. Indeed, it is important now to realise that paganism was attractive because it could cater for religious needs. In an age where science dominated and Christianity was increasingly challenged, paganism was able to provide an outlet for religious feeling.

Emphasis on religion can be seen in the nature of Carpenter's images of paganism. Carpenter appears to have had a highly religious temperament and he frequently referred to his message as the 'new religion'. The use of religious language allowed Carpenter to bolster his vision and express the totality of the change he envisaged. In expressing this he often used Christian imagery. For example, he called on people to 'wait, wait ever for the coming of the Lord. See that you are ready for his arrival'.²²³ He wrote of 'new heavens and a new earth' and that 'the Son of Man shall appear in your midst – as lover and judge'.²²⁴ However, as a religion, images of paganism presented themselves not solely as the completion of Christianity, but as one in which all religions should come together.²²⁵ For example, he described the path of the new society as a mighty stream on which

the ark floats, and Isis in her moon-shaped boat sails on with the corpse of Osiris, and the child-god out of the water rises seated on a lotus flower, and Brahma two-sexed dwells amid the groves, and the maidens weep for Adonis'.²²⁶

²²¹ Carpenter, *Days and Dreams*, 68.

²²² *Ibid.*, 67.

²²³ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, 174.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

²²⁵ Carpenter, *Civilisation*, 45.

²²⁶ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, 11.

This vision was asserted on the premise that cosmic consciousness was latent world wide and would come to fruition through the recognition of commonality in all religions. As Carpenter explained,

The religion of the future must come from the bosom itself of the modern peoples; it must be the recognition by Humanity as a whole of that Common life which has really underlain all the various religions of the past; it must be the certainty of the organic unity of mankind, of the brotherhood of all sentient creatures, freeing itself from all local doctrine and prejudice, and expressing itself in any and every available form.²²⁷

Such ideas incorporated the modern experience of empire and encounters with distant countries, as well as the Renaissance and Enlightenment project. Lowes Dickinson employed similar ideas of religion. On the Christian side, when his father commented that *A Modern Symposium* was a 'restatement of the incarnation, a vision of the divine growing in men', Lowes Dickinson said that his father understood him well.²²⁸ On the other hand, in his unpublished play, 'War and Peace', he asserted that Eastern and Western religions are interconnected. The character 'Reason' calls up Shelley to recite his poem 'Another Athens shall arise', which upon hearing 'Italy' cries, 'Pythagoras sang thus in my youth!' and 'India', 'Oh what a voice. I heard it long ago!'²²⁹

The way in which paganism could cater for the traditional needs of a religion, made it both attractive and radical. However, it remains to be seen to what extent these individuals can definitively be called 'pagan' in religion. The scholar Nigel Jones, considers Lowes Dickinson's love of ancient Greece not to amount to paganism in religion. He wrote that Lowes Dickinson and two fellow Cambridge dons, Nathaniel Wedd and Walter Headlam, were 'inspired by the ideals of ancient Greece, and aimed to re-create the atmosphere of Athens in its heyday,' and yet argued that they were 'agnostics, if not atheists, in belief and pagan in spirit'.²³⁰ Indeed, Lowes Dickinson tended to handle religion in secular terms, with emphasis on morality rather than divine revelation or theology.²³¹ However, this was a tendency prevalent in much of Victorian and Edwardian society, influenced as they were by secularist tones of Matthew Arnold. Educated men in Victorian England often formed their religious beliefs as an intellectual

²²⁷ Carpenter, *Angels' Wings*, 135-6.

²²⁸ In Forster, *Lowes Dickinson*, 111.

²²⁹ Lowes Dickinson, 'War and Peace', GLD 4/3.

²³⁰ Jones, *Rupert Brooke*, 42.

pursuit, navigating and negotiating their way through the multi-various discourses of the day. At the helm of this development was the Broad Church (as discussed in Chapter 1). It is notable that both Symonds and Carpenter grew up in a Broad Church environment, while Lowes Dickinson was brought up in an equally progressive Christian Socialist one. In contrast, the individuals to be discussed in the 'decadent' variety tend to have been brought up in stricter, more Puritan environments which perhaps accounts for their more reactionary in their defiance of Christian religion. In religion therefore, the men of this chapter were not full-blooded pagans, and rather, were influenced by more modern concepts of religion.

The memoirs of Symonds contain a highly interesting chapter in which he discusses his religion. He describes that through many influences, including Goethe, Whitman, Darwin, and Marcus Aurelius, he arrived at a belief in a form of scientific pantheism. Pivotal in this belief, he explained, was the influence of the 'Hymn of Cleanthes' of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus, which extolled a God of reason working through all of Nature that was governed by a Universal Law. However, Symonds felt unable to wholly define his faith and so instead adopted a motto to follow: 'to life resolvedly in the Whole, the Good, and the Beautiful'.²³² Hewlett was similarly unsure how to define what he believed, concluding eventually, 'I am sure I am a pantheist, because I worship the sun among other manifestations of God'.²³³ Later in life, when explaining the influences on *Pan and the Young Shepherd*, Hewlett cited the importance of Platonism, Greek mythology, and pantheism with the root idea being the 'oneness of creation, man as a natural force, differing in no essential way from the plants and animals', and wrote that he still believed this to be 'more or less true'.²³⁴ Thus broadly pantheist, the individuals we meet in this chapter were constantly re-evaluating their faith, unsure what word to attach to it, or how to express it. Such ambiguities were based on the fact that they did not directly attempt to reinstate specific ancient pagan rituals and forms of worship. Carpenter declared that such things would assume great importance in the future, but he asserted that for now emphasis needed to be on correct living. Lowes

²³¹ Seen, for example, in Lowes Dickinson, 'How Long Halt Ye?'.

²³² Written 14 April 1885, in *Memoirs of John Addington Symonds*, 242-52.

²³³ Letter dated 3 March 1891, in *Letters of Maurice Hewlett*, 24.

²³⁴ Letter dated 29 December 1907, in *Ibid.*, 84.

Dickinson believed likewise, seeing religion as the summit of the ideal, an ultimate goal for a perfected man.²³⁵ Thus it was believed that emphasis had to first be on man, with religion only following thereafter. Yet it is important to recognise that within their concepts of man they continually demonstrate highly spiritual and mystic temperaments, as will be seen in the examination of their views of man below.

It was in their concepts of man, rather than in their concepts of religion, that the ancient pagan ideas were most exalted. Firstly, there was an emphasis on the 'littleness' of man. This was based on ideas of the earthiness of man, which placed him in the natural world with the animals. Edward Thomas's belief in the importance of the natural world led him to write, 'it makes us feel the age of the earth, the greatness of Time, Space, and Nature; the littleness of man – the fact that the earth does not belong to man, but man to the earth'.²³⁶ In 'An Old Farm' Thomas described a man, who in the face of hard farm work wishes himself half horse half man, as a remnant of the old Golden Age:

Thirty centuries ago such a man, so marvellously in harmony with the earth world have gone down in men's memories as a demi-god or the best-loved of the fauns...Never was a man who seemed to take his mortality so happily and naturally'.²³⁷

Thus for him, paganism was the instinctual feeling of the masses in relation to their natural surroundings. This he expressed in 'Earth Children':

Her language stripped of its tattered and scanty Christianity, and her acts, without that Sunday journey, reveal the multitude's eternal paganism, which religions ruffle and sink into again – the paganism of the long lived, most helpless, proudest, and loneliest of animals, contending with winter and bad weather, with accident and disease and strange fears; rejoicing in fine weather, in strength, in the appetites; hating decay; distrusting the inhumanity of the heavens and animals and men from other climates; uncertain, troubled, and thinking little about the future.²³⁸

Hewlett similarly defined true religion as the reaction to experience and nature and saw paganism as fundamentally this-worldly. In the preface to the second edition of his book,

²³⁵ Lowes Dickinson, 'How Long Halt Ye?'

²³⁶ Thomas, *Pursuit of Spring*, 150.

²³⁷ Thomas, *Heart of England*, 73-5.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 144-6.

Earthwork out of Tuscany he asserted that some of these elements of paganism have never left the common Italian people.²³⁹

Carpenter also emphasised the earthiness of man and asserted that this perception was an ancient one:

Wherever the sea and the land are, is my trade, and it has been known since the eldest time: the ancient Mysteries and oracles hinted at it, the venerable ancient sages of India knew it, and the men and women who walked this earth before all history'.²⁴⁰

This places an emphasis on very ancient times, far remote even from the Hellenistic period of fifth-century Athens. Nevertheless, this was linked to the modern world through the cosmic consciousness. Jefferies similarly wrote of a supremely ancient paganism buried under civilisation:

Deep, deep down under the apparent man – covered over, it may be, with the ashes of many years, the scoriae of passion and lava of ambition, and these, too, spread over with their crust of civilisation, cultivated into smiling gardens, and rich cornfields, and happy glorious vineyards –under it all there is a buried city, a city of the inner heart, lost and forgotten these many days. There, on the walls of the chambers of that city, are pictures, fresh as when they were painted by the alchemy of light in the long, long years gone by. Dancing figures, full of young and joy, with gladness in very limb, with flowing locks, and glances wildly free.²⁴¹

The idea that the ancient way still existed, but buried, bears witness to his belief in the timelessness of the soul and his conviction that through the soul this vision has the capacity to live again.

Intrinsically connected to ideas about remote history was the concept of the goddess. As Hutton has explained, concepts of goddess worship as the original religion developed during the nineteenth century, arising through literature and the tailoring of archaeological discovery to fit the ideas.²⁴² In Hewlett's 'A Sacrifice at Prato', an article written from the standpoint of a 'cultivated Pagan, who should have journeyed in Time as well as Space', the religion depicted is that of the veneration of the Earth Mother.²⁴³ Similarly, Carpenter stressed the importance of 'O Mighty Mother' and in many

²³⁹ Hewlett, *Earthwork*, Chapter 12.

²⁴⁰ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, 97.

²⁴¹ Richard Jefferies, *The Scarlet Shawl. A Novel* (London: Tinsley Books, 1874), 236-7.

²⁴² Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, 32-42.

²⁴³ Hewlett, *Earthwork*, Chapter 3.

instances it appears that she is the one behind the ambiguous 'I'.²⁴⁴ Carpenter urged men towards a life lived in close co-operation with the Great Mother who is 'mother over all/ thou radiant life and one Reality'.²⁴⁵ At other times he tried to appeal to the Mother: 'Heal us, thy foolish children, from our sins/ Who...turn our bent backs upon thee, and scratch and scramble/ In ash-heaps for salvation'.²⁴⁶ For Carpenter, She is the creator and redeemer, themes both borrowed from Meredith.²⁴⁷ Augustus John was also influenced by Meredith's notion of an earth-mother religion. At one point, he used to regularly meet with his friends to discuss the question of a 'New Religion'. He described that he was always 'in favour of the rehabilitation of the Earth – Mother and Child, whose image installed in a covered wagon would be drawn by oxen and attended by dancing corybantes'.²⁴⁸ Indeed, many of his paintings, especially pre-1914, depicted simple figures in a wild landscape.²⁴⁹ Thus the Mother was often seen as the potential saviour of man, the one who would guide him to a love of the earth as the basis of his life. In such images, man was presented largely as a child, and one in desperate need of a mother.

Images of paganism emphasised not only the littleness and primitive nature of man; secondly, and probably more dominantly, was an emphasis on the rise of man and the latent potential in man, which only man himself could unlock. One aspect of the importance of man grew out of the romantic notion of the poet as prophet. Lowes Dickinson described how in his undergraduate days he was 'converted' by Shelley:

Shelley suddenly gripped me; I don't think as a poet, but as a visionary about life. His landscapes, always shimmering with moonlight streams, his loneliness, his passionate and ideal love were what seized me...I read Hogg's life of him...as though it were a new gospel'.²⁵⁰

Symonds described a new smaller edition of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* as being able to 'snuggle to a man's breast and lie there', clearly suggesting that for him it assumed the

²⁴⁴ For example, Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, 215.

²⁴⁵ 'Veiled Isis, Or the Nature Worshipper' in *Narcissus and Other Poems* (London: Henry S. King and Co, 1873), 132-6.

²⁴⁶ Carpenter, 'O Gracious Mother' in *The Ethical Record* (July, 1904), 195. Carpenter Collection, Reel 38.

²⁴⁷ Meredith, 'Earth and Man' in *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth* (1883) repr. in *Poems of George Meredith*, I. 264-73.

²⁴⁸ Augustus John, *Chiaroscuro: Fragments of Autobiography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954), 52.

²⁴⁹ As pointed out by Michael Holroyd, *Augustus John*, 2 vols. (London: Heinemann, 1975), I. 74.

traditional place of the Bible.²⁵¹ Such ideas extended to the reception and appreciation of Carpenter. Fenner Brockway and Kate Conway both described *Towards Democracy* as a 'Modern Bible'.²⁵² Edward Lewis similarly described, 'towards the climax of a personal crisis which had been gathering for some years, the voice came to me also, 'Tolle, lege,' and the scripture that was in my hand was *Towards Democracy*'. He wrote that he received the words of the book as a 'divine call issuing from the great Life of equality, freedom, love'. In this context, it is interesting to note that recent scholarship on the reception of books at this time has posited a rise of the spiritual significance of reading and the idea that books could function as a way to uncover one's soul and extend and refine the boundaries of the self.²⁵³ The intensity with which Lewis experienced *Towards Democracy* led him to visit Millthorpe. Here his spiritual experience through a book was heightened: he felt 'with suddenness of a miracle I was out through the open door, my Self was harmonised' and, after talking late into the night with Carpenter, the soon to be ex-clergyman went to bed thinking 'for the first time in all my life, I think I know what Freedom means, and Equality, and Religion, and God'.²⁵⁴ Charles Ashbee was also clearly very much in awe of Carpenter and wrote in his diary in 1886 when Carpenter was in Cambridge that it was 'as if we had a hero among us. We are knit together by a Presence'.²⁵⁵ Edith Lees hailed Carpenter a seer, while E.M. Forster proclaimed him both 'saint' and 'prophet'.²⁵⁶ Carpenter's use of the word 'I' in *Towards Democracy* probably encouraged these perceptions, and such phrases as 'Lo! I open a door'²⁵⁷ reminds the reader of Jesus' 'I am the way'. For George Ives, an admirer of Carpenter and who described his own religious belief as 'Whitmanic paganism',²⁵⁸ Carpenter was instead like an Eastern saint, with guru-like qualities.²⁵⁹ Thus depending on the disposition of the

²⁵⁰ *Autobiography*, 61. He expressed himself similarly in a letter to Grahame Dent, 4 March, 1906, GLD 5/10.

²⁵¹ Letter dated 15 January 1892, in *Letters and Papers*, 251-2.

²⁵² In Rowbotham and Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life*, 69-70; 115.

²⁵³ See Brocklebank, 'Psychic Reading'.

²⁵⁴ Lewis, *Edward Carpenter*, 293; 296.

²⁵⁵ Cited in Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter*, 68.

²⁵⁶ Mrs. Havelock Ellis, *Three Modern Seers* (London: Stanley Paul and Co., 1910), 202-28; E.M. Forster, 'Some Memories' in *In Appreciation*, 74-81, 74.

²⁵⁷ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, 154.

²⁵⁸ Letter dated 23 February 1905, cited in John Stokes, 'Wilde at Bay: the Diary of George Ives' in *Oscar Wilde: Myths, Miracles, and Imitations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 63-88, 84.

²⁵⁹ George Ives, 'A Pilgrimage to Derbyshire' in *In Appreciation*, 122-31, 131.

receiver, Carpenter was viewed as a number of different religious figures, his work being able to be hailed as prophesy since it relied not on research but on intuition and inspiration.

Although Carpenter came to be seen as a kind of religious leader, this was not a station he chose for himself. He did not claim to have any special authority or any direct line to heavenly knowledge. He argued against the spiritual arrogance which he believed religious leaders often possess. For example, he claimed that affectation of a supernatural mission spoilt Kingsford and Maitland since they became infected with 'heavenly conceit'.²⁶⁰ The key to understanding the position he afforded to religious knowledge and to himself can be found in his mystical appreciation of religion and spirituality. Carpenter argued that by its primary emphasis on religion, the Christian teleology often operates to the detriment of society. Lowes Dickinson, who argued likewise, asserted that revealed religion leads to much evil since the intellect is ignored.²⁶¹ They believed that in contrast to Christian notions of revelation, authority should be given to whole of society. In this teleology, correct living needed to be achieved before society can move on to religion. Carpenter argued that correct living would bring forth psychological evolution because men would increasingly be able to realise the nature of their souls and so tap into the cosmic consciousness. Thus a man's long expected saviour would be found 'within his own breast' since within each man a god lies imprisoned.²⁶² In this logic, it was impossible for any visionary to truly grasp the workings of the future society.²⁶³ This accounts for the way in which religion remained vague, or, more properly, mystical, in calls for a new paganism. Carpenter could assert its future triumph and call people to work towards it, but he was not preaching a religion ready-formed.

Carpenter, Lowes Dickinson and Meredith all spoke of a difference between 'men' and 'Man'. 'Man' referred to the collective idealised self which has yet to be incarnate, while 'men' referred to individuals who actively work to achieve 'Man'. They believed that paganism spoke for the men in Man and Christianity for the Man in men. Lowes Dickinson argued that Christianity started with an ideal which it could not fully

²⁶⁰ Carpenter, *Days and Dreams*, 240-4.

²⁶¹ Forster, *Lowes Dickinson*, 119.

²⁶² Carpenter, *Pagan and Christian Creed*, 279; 235.

²⁶³ Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age*, 149.

grasp and which would, by this emphasis, never be able to come to fruition.²⁶⁴ His call was for the pagan method, arguing that it was nature's will to create one who has the power to create himself. He placed importance on the Greek ideal of what men should be since, given that 'man is a creature not finished, even approximately', explorations of 'the infinite and greatness will be most fruitfully undertaken by men whose feet are firmly planted on the basis of physical health, of trained reason, and of social conscience justly at ease'. Symonds similarly placed emphasis on the Greek hallmark, reason. He argued that men must follow the reason of the Greeks and obey their consciousness, since it reflects the order of the universe and enables men to become partakers in its movement. He emphasised the importance of the Greek command 'know thyself' and argued that this was the unique message to man, the only being with the faculty for obeying it.²⁶⁵ Therefore paganism was not used as this-worldly, but as a religion or spirituality which reverses the teleology of knowledge. However, this evolutionary method was not dressed up as an easy process. Carpenter argued that it was the duty of every man to try to fully realise the universal conscience, to actively seek the new society. He spoke out against complacency calling men to 'be arrogant rather than humble, rash rather than stupidly content' and urging all to embark on individual battles against apathetic routine and human inertia.²⁶⁶ In *A Modern Symposium*, Lowes Dickinson's fictional speaker, Vivian, called men to march towards the Greek gods; however this was to be like climbing a great mountain.²⁶⁷ Meredith also used the mountain metaphor, openly confessing that the summit is not in sight but that striving towards it is the essence of living.²⁶⁸ He hoped primarily for progress rather than perfectibility.

Due to an emphasis on the importance of man, Carpenter declared 'wondrous is Man,'²⁶⁹ and argued that man can be made king since the world is the 'immense world of MAN'.²⁷⁰ He asserted that developments in modern science are insufficient to explain man's destiny since he believed it only able to define something by reference to a lower stage and so could only define the human by the subhuman. He argued that this prevented

²⁶⁴ Lowes Dickinson, 'How Long Halt Ye?'.
²⁶⁵ Symonds, *Greek Poets*, II. 415.

²⁶⁶ Carpenter, *England's Ideal*, 19.
²⁶⁷ Lowes Dickinson, *Modern Symposium* 158.

²⁶⁸ J.B. Priestley, *George Meredith* (London: MacMillan, 1926), 73.
²⁶⁹ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, 359.

science from getting outside of man, and so he called for a divine science that looks beyond man and so defines man by higher stages.²⁷¹ Thus he afforded man a high status beyond traditional Christian concepts of man and God, elevating man to the position of near god. This would have been attractive since, due to the changes incurred by the industrial and scientific Revolutions as well as the experience of the British Empire, there was a tendency to believe in the limitless power of man. However, at the same time, the scientific revolution undermined the unique status of humankind and so science was often not felt to be a sufficient replacement for religion. Such longing for divinity can be seen in the calls of the nature writers. In Jefferies's article 'Nature and Eternity' he asked:

Would that it were possible for the heart and mind to enter into all the life that glows and teems upon the earth to feel with it, hope with it, sorrow with it, and thereby become a grander, nobler being...Let me see the mystery of life – the secret of the sap as it rises in the tree – the secret of the blood as it courses through the vein...Never did vivid imagination stretch out the powers of Deity with such fullness, with such intellectual grasp, vigour, omniscience, as the human mind could reach to, if only its organs, its means, were equal to the thought. Give us, then, greater strength of body, greater length of days; give us more vital energy, let our limbs be mighty as those of the giants of old. Supplement such organs with nobler mechanical engines – with extended means of locomotion; add novel and more minute methods of analysis and discovery. Let us become as demi-gods.²⁷²

Like Carpenter, Jefferies hoped that man would come to understand all of nature, not through diminishing his status to that of the animal, but by increasing it to a near god. He believed that fragments of Greek art could awaken the soul-desire latent in men and so argued that ancient Greece is a glimpse of the future. Therefore, paganism had a special appeal because of the supreme position it afforded to man. Christianity was often attractive in the nineteenth century for the elevated position it gave to man in the face of science; yet, in Christian theology man was still subordinate to God and the angels. Perhaps more than any other, paganism allowed man to be the glory of all creation and the poetic hero.

Carpenter's call for the simplification of life was based on the assertion of getting closer to the cosmic consciousness. He argued that by retracing steps within one's self, and the deeper down one goes, the nearer one gets to universal life and that which lives in

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁷¹ Edward Carpenter, *Modern Science: A Criticism* (Manchester: John Heywood, 1885); repr. together with 'Science of the Future: A Forecast' in Carpenter, *Civilisation*, 52-99.

²⁷² Richard Jefferies, *The Hills and The Vale* (1909; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 296.

all its branches.²⁷³ The idea of the cosmic consciousness as a beginning and an end, to which the soul is forever trying to return, comes close to Eastern philosophy. Indeed, Carpenter was attracted to the tranquillity of the East and the way in which it cast off material trappings. He called India the 'Wisdom-land',²⁷⁴ and in a letter from Ceylon wrote that much of Eastern religion 'throws our Western religions into the shade',²⁷⁵. However, the Eastern ideal asserted annihilation of the individual self by merging with the universe and this was rejected by the exponents of paganism. Carpenter employed the idea of a universal consciousness but he argued against the denial of personal relations and the release from individual thought and desire.²⁷⁶ Lowes Dickinson agreed, summing up the Eastern view as 'man is a mere episode – rather an illusion – in the eternal life of the Absolute. And the only object is to get reabsorbed into that. Not for me thanks!'²⁷⁷ However, it is interesting to note that as a young man, Lowes Dickinson was attracted to the mysticism of Plontinus.²⁷⁸ Plontinus' argument that the soul is eternal but tends to merge in an overarching principle of 'Nous', posits a loss of personality if not even identity, and highlights that perhaps the differences in belief were not quite so stark. Nevertheless, overall it is important to point out paganism remained a Western product, and was shaped by and catered for specifically Western thought about the importance of individuality. For Carpenter, once 'Man' is achieved this does not mean that 'men' do not matter. Instead an intricate thread is woven between a communal overarching self of universal consciousness and the retention of individuality.

Carpenter envisaged a kind of superman, who is both lord and master, and has identified himself with the immortal self of the world. This is not the same as Nietzsche's 'superman' since Carpenter's idea of the perfect man was not 'beyond man' in the sense of being distinct from the world. Carpenter's man had a sense of unity with nature and a realisation of the common life and so merged into his general socialism.²⁷⁹ He stated that

²⁷³ Carpenter, *Angels' Wings*, 132-40

²⁷⁴ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, 440.

²⁷⁵ Letter to Kate Salt, 24 November 1890, Carpenter Collection, MSS 354-11.

²⁷⁶ Edward Carpenter, *From Adam's Peak to Elephanta: Sketches in Ceylon and India* (London: Swann Sonnenschein, 1892), 178-9.

²⁷⁷ *Autobiography*, 180.

²⁷⁸ As described in Lowes Dickinson, *Autobiography*, 67-74.

²⁷⁹ Carpenter criticized Nietzsche in 'Morality under Socialism' in *The Albany Review* (September, 1907), 626-639.

in the psychological evolution the 'mass man must rule in each unit man, else the unit man must drop off and die'; thus it was for the health of the individual that the eternal unity must be realised.²⁸⁰ Similarly, his ideas of harmony with society did not entail any total communalism of relations. He believed that relations between fellows would become more definite, arguing it is 'the nature of love that as it realises its own aims it should rivet always more and more towards a durable and distinct relationship, not resting till a permanent mate and equal is found'.²⁸¹ He also believed that death did not mean the end of the individual self, as seen in his declaration that love was safe in the invisible world and would unite friends after death.²⁸² Forster commented that Carpenter's idea of a consciousness beyond mortality amounted to a Communion of Heroes; something Forster felt Carpenter believed in far more ardently than any Christian believed in the Communion of Saints.²⁸³ This links Carpenter's ideas to a pagan emphasis on heroes, which placed primary importance on great actions performed on earth.

Carpenter called those on earth to live nobly through love. He claimed that in doing so they would be contributing their part to the building of the Kingdom of love which linked earth to heaven.²⁸⁴ Indeed, an emphasis on love is the cornerstone of this variety of paganism. As well as enabling the continuity of the individual, love was perceived as the ideal which touches and unites every facet of society. For Symonds, love is the embodiment of the man who dwelt before Christ who is now sleeping and waiting for the new time to come.²⁸⁵ For Lowes Dickinson, love is the ideal coming nearer than anything else to absolute good, so people must strive to become fit to love and be loved; he saw ancient Greece as the most stimulating example of this.²⁸⁶ For Carpenter, love was the sustenance of nations, the binding and directing force of society, and the divine messenger in his call for the future, intimating its meaning through passionate expression:

²⁸⁰ Carpenter, *Civilisation*, 28.

²⁸¹ Carpenter, *Love's Coming Of Age*, 141.

²⁸² Edward Carpenter, 'Farewell Message left by Edward Carpenter to be Read over his Grave' (December 1910), in *In Appreciation*, 244-6, 246.

²⁸³ E.M. Forster, 'Some Memories', 77.

²⁸⁴ Carpenter, 'Farewell Message', 246.

²⁸⁵ Symonds, 'Leuke' in *New and Old*, 35-41.

²⁸⁶ G. Lowes Dickinson, *The Meaning of Good* (1901; repr., London: Grant Allen and Unwin, 1925), 172.

‘even now for a moment round your neck, advancing, I stretch my arms; to my lips I draw you, I press upon your lips the seal of a covenant that cannot be forgotten’.²⁸⁷

As has been seen, this variety of paganism was a serious approach to the problems of the day, aiming at a full and satisfied humanity. It presented ancient Greek paganism as the ideal society but it was also a manifestation of supremely modern thought; in Carpenter’s words

simplification of life, back to land, tendencies to paganism in morals and religion, to nature-methods in art, to orientalism in philosophy...are all obviously enough of the same character...at the same time these movements are no mere reversions, but point pretty distinctly to fresh developments from the earlier ideal which they imply’.²⁸⁸

This variety of paganism held within it many attractions; however, it is important to note that, existing as a collection of radical ideas rather than a discrete doctrine, people could buy into pagan ideas to differing degrees. While Edward Lewis experienced Carpenter’s work as a life changing event and left the Christian ministry to preach the new paganism,²⁸⁹ Edith Lees experienced her visits to Carpenter as a ‘veritable cough drop ...[which] does good for a month’.²⁹⁰ In addition, although the individuals we have encountered in this chapter were dissatisfied with wider society, it is notable that this variety of paganism generally bears witness to a high degree of optimism in Victorian and Edwardian radical circles. Overall, it exists as a collection of positive visions, which believed in a goodness and power innate in humankind that would eventually triumph. Nonetheless, not everyone could sustain such hopes at all times. Symonds was a figure plagued by disillusion and in one of his more depressive moments he questioned what was left for modern man. ‘We cannot be Greek now,’ he wrote, ‘we are only left to take Hasheesh – to dull the pangs of present illusions of fancy and self-indulgent dreaming’; the Athens of Plato, he argued, could only ever be ‘in your narcotic visions’.²⁹¹ This hardly expresses the optimism of Carpenter, yet Symonds’s pessimism and frustration perhaps leads us nicely on to our second variety of paganism.

²⁸⁷ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, 109.

²⁸⁸ Edward Carpenter, ‘The Return to Nature’, 246.

²⁸⁹ Lewis, *Edward Carpenter*, 288-303.

²⁹⁰ Letter to Carpenter dated 15 November 1898, Carpenter Collection, MSS 358-4.

²⁹¹ Brown, ed. *Biography*, I. 418.

CHAPTER 4: DECADENT PAGANISM

Whereas the paganism of our previous variety attempted to reconcile or tone down the dichotomy between pagan and Christian, ancient and modern, the literature of the present variety tends to emphasise and even exaggerate the differences. Important in this context is the disparate group of artists, writers and poets in the 1890s known as the 'decadents'. 'Decadence' was a counter-cultural branch of literature which specialised in licentiousness, shock tactics, and the grotesque. The decadents created images of a paganism not calm and sane but disreputable, immoral and fundamentally unchristian. The literary expression of this paganism enabled it to be used as an escapist fantasy by those disenchanted by the modern world. This use outlived the decadent 1890s and continued in various forms in Edwardian literature. This chapter examines this literature of paganism and the authors behind it in an attempt to unveil and understand the form and function that this variety of paganism took. As we shall see, despite the various attractions of 'decadent paganism', its literary basis often rendered it incapable of providing complete comfort from the problems of the day.

Many of the themes and individuals which we encounter in this chapter have been the subject of previous academic assessment. Decadence and the decadents have long been popular topics for scholars of English literature; as seen, for example, in the work of Fletcher, Stokes, Beckson, Sturgis, Navarette and Bernheimer.¹ The novelist, Kenneth Grahame, who is highly important in this chapter, has had several biographies written about him, most notably by Peter Green and more recently by Alison Prince, and is often discussed by scholars of children's literature.² Another significant figure, the writer and

¹ Ian Fletcher, ed. *Decadence and the 1890s* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979); John Stokes, *In the Nineties* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989); Karl Beckson, *London in the 1890s: A Cultural History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992); Matthew Sturgis, *Passionate Attitudes: The English Decadence of the 1890s* (London: MacMillan, 1995); Susan J. Navarette, *The Shape of Fear: Horror and the Fin de Siecle Culture of Decadence* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998); Charles Bernheimer, *Decadent Subjects: The Idea of Decadence in Art, Literature, Philosophy, and Culture of the Fin de Siecle in Europe* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 2001).

² Peter Green, *Kenneth Grahame: A New Study of His Work and Times* (London: John Murray, 1959); Alison Prince, *Kenneth Grahame: An Innocent in the Wild Wood* (London: Allison and Busby, 1994); Jackie Wüllschlager, *Inventing Wonderland: The Lives and Fantasies of Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, J.M. Barrie, Kenneth Grahame and A.A. Milne*. (London: Methuen, 1995), 145-74.

poet, William Sharp, has received less scholarly attention, the most noteworthy being a biography by Flavia Alaya and a shorter text by Terry L. Meyers.³ Scholars have also studied the use of the Pan-motif in the literature of the period; a discussion of this material can be found below, more appropriately, in the section which discusses Pan.

Due to the abundance of scholarly work, this variety of paganism probably seems the most familiar to the general reader, dealing with individuals more prominent (or at least more visible because more vociferous and expressly combatant) than the likes of Carpenter, and more obvious than the magical paganism of secret nineteenth century societies. However, this is not to say that the themes and individuals in this chapter have been exhausted; far from it. Firstly, despite numerous academic works, none of those listed above have focused on these individuals as a group from the point of view of paganism. Many often cite paganism but merely assume its role, nature, and influence without taking the time to examine it fully.⁴ Hutton has led the way in countering this problem, examining this variety, broadly his 'fourth language' of paganism, in *Triumph of the Moon*⁵; nevertheless, there is room to examine his implications in more depth. Secondly, the vast majority of scholarly works have been published by those academics trained and operating in the field of English literature. While these works are no doubt of great value to the historian, the approach undertaken in this chapter combines analysis of literature with the complexities of a historical method, aiming to set the individuals and their work ever more precisely within the social and cultural climate and in the continuum of the rise of modern paganism. Thirdly, by examining the literature of the period purposely from the point of view of paganism, this chapter identifies many works and examples hitherto not discussed.

Oscar Wilde read classics at Cambridge and had a detailed, formal understanding of the ancient world. His notebooks and journals reveal an immersion in classical thought

³ Flavia Alaya, *William Sharp – 'Fiona Macleod' 1855-1905* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1970); Terry L. Meyers, *The Sexual Tension of William Sharp: A Study of the Birth of Fiona Macleod* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996).

⁴ The notable exception to this is Peter Green, who examines the paganism of Grahame with many excellent insights and observations but by the nature of his work this is, of course, limited to Grahame.

⁵ Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, 21-31.

and that barely a day went by without him recording some new consideration of the ancient texts. In 1881 he published his first volume of poetry. The poetry in the book as a whole reveals his fondness for Greek themes and the preface poem, 'Helas!' at once announces it. 'Helas!' ends:

Surely there was a time I might have trod
The sunlit heights, and from life's dissonance
Struck one clear chord to reach the ears of God:
Is that time dead? lo! with a little rod
I did but touch the honey of romance –
And must I lose a soul's inheritance?⁶

The academic scholars of Wilde, Philip Smith and Michael Helford, have argued that this illustrates his 'creative and critical efforts to establish a New Hellenism which represents an antithesis to the fallen world of the present, at once a dialectical return to and advance forward from the golden age of Greece'.⁷ Here the key word is 'creative'; in his literary imagination Wilde does not wholly represent the Greece of his classical learning. Douglas Bush has described Wilde's creation as 'an ideal and idyllic home of art, beauty, liberty, blithe serenity, and occasional ecstasy with free-hearted nymphs'.⁸ A critic of Wilde's volume of poetry at the time wrote, 'Wilde may talk of Greece; but there is nothing Greek about his poems; his nudities do not suggest the sacred whiteness of an antique statue, but rather the forcible unveiling of some insulted innocence'. A reviewer of a later work, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, similarly expressed, 'it delights him [Wilde]...to masque as an Athenian. But he is no Athenian...The Athenians would not have been tolerant of this sham Athenian'. The reviewer also highlights George Meredith's criticism that Wilde creates 'An Epicurean whom Epicurus would have scourged out of his Garden'.⁹ By his creative imagination Wilde is a Hellenist but not a classicist. Through a personal rendering of Hellenism Wilde was operating within a

⁶ Oscar Wilde, 'Helas!' in *Poems* (London: David Boque, 1881).

⁷ Philip E. Smith II and Michael S. Helford, eds. *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 36.

⁸ Douglas Bush, *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry* (Cambridge, Mass: 1937; repr., New York: Pageant, 1957), 423.

⁹ Justin Huntly McCarthy, 'Review on Lady Windermere's Fan' in *Gentleman's Magazine* (April, 1892), 476; repr. in *Oscar Wilde: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Karl Beckson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), 131.

literary genre which used paganism as a cultural image against the modern world. This was something developed and taken to extremes in the decadent movement of the 1890s, a movement which had Wilde as its 'High Priest'.¹⁰

Founded in the creative arts, decadence was able to use paganism to draw together images far beyond the reality of paganism in the ancient world. In 1891 W.F. Barry wrote an article for the *Quarterly Review* in criticism of what he perceived to be 'a significant and widely extended movement in our time' - 'Neo-Paganism'. Therein he asserted that the decadents 'though by no means classic in a noble sense, are unquestionably pagan'. He believed that they were influenced by the ancients, especially Catullus, Apuleius and the Greek lyrical singers. However, he asserted that 'the style which corresponds to sentiment is art arriving at pitch of extreme maturity under descending suns of civilisation in decline'. He argued that this 'neo-paganism' had supremely literary roots, existing as a form of extreme literary criticism and pessimism. He asserted that it was not a modern form of Greek Humanism but rather, perverted from ancient thought, it revolved solely around poetic passion and the love of beauty.¹¹ In a later work in which he reasserted and expanded his tirade on modern paganism, he wrote that 'neo-paganism' was 'queen of Epicureans, Cyrenaics, dilettanti – of all those who chose to be "exquisite humanists" rather than humane, who prefer sensations to principles and intoxication to duty'.¹² Thus in criticising the paganism he perceived, Barry located decadence and the arts at its nexus and set national decline and pessimism as its operational climate.

In analysis of this form of literary paganism, let us first delve behind the propaganda and examine what, precisely, decadence was. Wilde described Walter Pater's book, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), as 'my golden book...the very flower of decadence';¹³ thus perhaps we should start here. In a most striking conclusion to the book, Pater undermined the concept of art as morally elevating. This was the sentiment that Theophile Gautier had already attached in France preaching 'l'art pour

¹⁰ Wilde was described as the 'High Priest of Decadence' in the *National Observer* (6 April, 1895).

¹¹ W.F. Barry, 'Neo-Paganism' in *Quarterly Review*, 172 (1891), 273-304.

¹² W.F. Barry, 'Latter Day Pagans' in *The Heralds of Revolt: Studies in Modern Literature and Dogma* (London: Hodder and Sloughton, 1909), 309-80, 310.

¹³ Wilde to W.B. Yeats, cited in Beckson, *London in the 1890s*, 41. Note the title of Pater's book changed with its second edition to *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*.

l'art'; however it was Pater who articulated and expanded the idea in England. Pater argued that art gives one nothing but the highest quality to one's moments as they pass and exists simply for those moments' sake. In addition, he asserted that everything is in a state of flux and relativity, rendering individual consciousness the only certainty. He developed these ideas in his seminal work of fiction, *Marius the Epicurean* (1885). The book traced the philosophical journey of young Marius in the Roman Empire of the second century AD. At one point, Marius expounded a mixture of Epicureanism and Cyreniacism; that one should endeavour to live solely by one's impressions and sensations. Rather than this functioning as a search to find an end comprehensive philosophy, this experience itself was the end. Thus decadent theories on art drew on ideas from the classical world, linking decadence to paganism.

The bridge which decadent ideas made between art and life brought paganism in literature into the social arena and encouraged the idea of paganism as a very real social threat. Decadent ideas changed concepts of morality. Since art was no longer linked to social progress, it was no longer linked to its age. In effect this gave art license to be expressed in whichever way the artist chose. Wilde expounded this sentiment in his preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891): 'they are the elect to whom the beautiful things mean only Beauty...there is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book'.¹⁴ Where art was given license so too were individuals. Pater fused ideas about art and life together and so the decadent movement can be seen to be equally concerned with ideas of life as it was with art. Pater's theories freed men from an overarching philosophy and gave supreme position to the individual, who was then to live by the sensations which he enjoyed. Many decadents thus aimed to live by Marius's discovery that 'not what I do but what I am...is what [is] indeed pleasing to the gods'.¹⁵ It became the vogue to call this the 'New Hedonism'. Grant Allen wrote an important article under this title in which he argued that self-sacrifice was a meaningless and impossible concept but through self-development people could become happier and more useful. He urged for a life lived by the rule 'be happy and you will be virtuous'. He explicitly linked this to Greek thought,

¹⁴ Oscar Wilde, 'Preface' to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London: Ward Locke and Co., 1891), 1-3.

¹⁵ Pater, *Marius*, 154.

highlighting that the Greeks had understood this maxim and it was to their credit that they perceived sexual relations as good.¹⁶ He asserted the same anti-ascetic, pro-pagan sentiments in his poem 'The Return of Aphrodite'. The rule of Aphrodite rendered a world of brilliant splendour and happiness, but tragically asceticism triumphed:

Crushing, consuming, destroying,
Washing her wines in their spleen,
Spilling her costly cosmetics,
Swept the implacable, lean
Horde of ascetics.

Darkness spread over the earth,
Sorrow and fasting of faces;
Mute was the music of mirth:
Hushed was the chorus of Graces.¹⁷

The poem ends by explaining that Aphrodite is currently being called back and so hopes that she will soon rule again.

Oscar Wilde similarly advocated that people in the modern age should aim towards hedonism and complete what the Greeks began. He argued that pleasure is nature's test and her sign of approval, so that when man is happy it means he is in correct relations with himself and his environment. Thus he declared, 'New Individualism is the New Hellenism'. He believed that men should achieve a 'New Hellenism' whereby the aim is not so much the traditional Hellenic call to 'know thyself' but rather to 'be thyself'. He asserted that the ancient Greeks had aimed towards this but were hampered because their system was supported by slavery. In the absence of slavery, he believed that modern man would not fail.¹⁸ Therefore, ancient Greek paganism was used as the antithesis of Christian asceticism and as both the inspiration and endorsement of a call to a different way of approaching both art and life.

In this way, paganism was increasingly used as a sponsor of a hedonistic way of life. As we have seen, Carpenter's variety of paganism tended to shy away from the P-word for fear of negative or unintended connotations. It was the use of the word employed by the decadents and the literature which we meet in this chapter that dictated

¹⁶ Grant Allen, 'The New Hedonism' in *Fortnightly Review* 55, No. 327 (March, 1894), 377-92.

¹⁷ 'The Return of Aphrodite' in Grant Allen, *The Lower Slopes* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1894).

¹⁸ Oscar Wilde, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' in *The Fortnightly Review* (February, 1891).

these fears. Adherents to ideas of decadence applied the word 'pagan' liberally and so did their critics. Through decadence and the ancient Greek ideas underpinning the movement, 'pagan' came to be a dirty word broadly denoting licentiousness. *The Daily Telegraph* labelled decadence 'a French and pagan plague'.¹⁹ More mildly, but equally contemptuous, *Punch* described the letterpress of *The Yellow Book* as 'silly and neo-pagan'.²⁰ G.K. Chesterton remembered the 1890s for the 'atmosphere of the Decadents, and their perpetual hints of the luxurious horrors of paganism'²¹; a reviewer of *Dorian Gray* equated paganism with that which 'delights in dirtiness and confesses its delight'²²; and an essayist writing in the *Quarterly Review* wrote of the lowered morality of the times as that form of 'indulgence hitherto severely kept down, but in Pagan epochs rampant and unashamed'²³.

Linked to the 1890s decadence, images of paganism became cut off from their classical roots. *The Yellow Book* was the mouthpiece of the decadents and, although it has the odd classical reference, it is in fact not especially pagan in the classical sense.²⁴ Similarly *The Savoy* (in many ways the successor of *The Yellow Book*) does not appear entrenched in classical thought.²⁵ One key reason for the severing of decadence from the ancient world was because Pater's work was not always taken up in the spirit in which it was intended. T.S. Eliot attributed a number of 'untidy lives' to Pater's influence²⁶ and W.H. Mallock wrote that Pater's influence was subversive since his only two topics were art and self-indulgence.²⁷ Holbrook Jackson commented that passages in *Marius* read like invitations²⁸ while Richard Le Gallienne perceived *Marius* as a 'lofty, austere gospel of

¹⁹ 6 April, 1895; cited in Jonathan Goodman, *The Oscar Wilde File* (London: W.H. Allen, 1989), 76.

²⁰ Cited in Matthew Sturgis, *Passionate Attitudes*, 218.

²¹ G.K. Chesterton, *Autobiography* (London: Hutchinson, 1936), 92.

²² Samuel Henry Jeyes, 'A Study in Puppydom' in *St. James's Gazette* (24 June, 1890), 3-4; repr. in *Wilde: The Critical Heritage*, 67-71, 71.

²³ 'Professor Huxley's Creed' in *Quarterly Review*, 180, No. 359 (1895), 160-88, 178.

²⁴ *The Yellow Book*, 13 vols. (London: Elkin Matthews and John Lane, 1894-1897). It is generally held that the publication lost much of its impetus after the first four volumes due to Aubrey Beardsley's departure.

²⁵ *The Savoy*, 8 vols. (London: Leonard Smithers, 1896).

²⁶ Beckson, *London in the 1890s*, 39.

²⁷ Sturgis, *Passionate Attitudes*, 48.

²⁸ Holbrook Jackson, *The Eighteen Nineties: A Review of Art and Ideas at the Close of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Grant Richards, 1913; repr., London: Cape, 1927), 59.

pleasure' dangerous for the weak minded.²⁹ Pater himself realised the dangers inherent in his ideas and omitted the 'Conclusion' in the Second Edition of *The Renaissance*, with the explanation, 'I conceive it might possibly mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall'.³⁰ Furthermore, there was another strong influence acting on the young would-be English decadents: French decadence. French decadence set a precedent for the English and established a tradition of the production of shocking works. Particularly influential on English decadence was Joris-Karl Huysmans's novel *A Rebours* (1884) in which the hero explicitly aims to befoul himself 'with base and carnal acts' and 'drink the cup of sensuality to its last and bitter dregs'.³¹ Released from the constraints of traditional morality, the decadents often crossed the boundary into outright defiance.

For Andrew Lang, decadence could easily be achieved: 'by kicking holes in his boots, crushing his hat, and avoiding soap, any young man may achieve a comfortable degree of sordidness, and then, if his verses are immaterial, and his life suicidal, he may regard himself as a decadent indeed'.³² Le Gallienne compared decadents to naughty children who, by wanting to lie in the gutter without reproach, aimed to be deliberately offensive.³³ For many, it became more a pose than a serious set of ideas and so the classical pagan basis was diminished. Lionel Johnson, himself linked to the decadent movement but more as a strict Paterian disciple, ridiculed the aesthetic sham of the decadents in an article entitled 'The Cultured Faun'. Here he delineates, recipe-style, what makes a 'cultured faun' culminating in the final ingredient: 'since we are scholars and none of your penny-a-line Bohemians, we throw in occasional doses of "Hellenism"'. This is of fundamental importance because it highlights that in using Hellenism the decadents were continuing the traditional Victorian practice of employing the classics to

²⁹ Richard Le Gallienne, *Retrospective Reviews* (London: John Lane, 1896), 140.

³⁰ 'Preface' to Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, 2nd edition (London: MacMillan, 1877).

³¹ Joris-Karl Huysmans, *A Rebours* (Paris: Charpentier, 1884), Huysmans, Joris-Karl. *A Rebours* (Paris: Charpentier, 1884); extract trans. and repr. in *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890s*, ed. Karl Beckson (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1981), 292-302, 292.

³² In J.H. Buckley, *The Triumph of Time: A Study of Victorian Concepts of Time, History, Progress and Decadence* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1967), 90.

³³ Richard Le Gallienne, *The Religion of a Literary Man* (London: Elkin Matthews and John Lane, 1893), 104-5.

portray themselves as men of culture. Where they differ, however, is in the classical ideal they expounded. This was, as Johnson described, ‘a flowery paganism, such as no ‘Pagan’ ever had; a mixture of beautiful woodland natures, and the perfect comeliness of the Parthenon frieze, together with the elegant languors and favourite vices of the Stratonis Epigrammata’.³⁴ It should be noted that while it is true the ancients were not the whiter than white men perceived by the mid-Victorians, the decadents were by no means trying to achieve historical accuracy. They manipulated images of paganism, employing it as a vehicle to achieve shock and outrage.

Highly important in this context, and whose influence on decadent images of paganism can hardly be overstated, was Charles Algernon Swinburne. Bush has argued that Swinburne was especially important in England because it was he who naturalised the romantic agonies and pseudo-Hellenic poses of continental modern paganism in England.³⁵ Looking back in retrospect, Arthur Machen wrote in his autobiography, ‘more furious and frantic nonsense has been talked about “paganism” than about almost any other subject; it will only be necessary to think of Swinburne with his ‘world grown grey’ phrase to indicate the manner of nonsense I have in mind’.³⁶ Machen was referring to Swinburne’s ‘Hymn to Proserpine’, first published in *Poems and Ballads* (1866). Here Swinburne wrote of the effects of the proclamation of Christian faith in Rome with sorrow and defiance, arguing that the new Gods ‘are merciful, clothed with pity’ but that ‘for me their new device is barren, the days are bare’. He juxtaposed the two creeds thus:

Wilt thou take yet all, Galilean? But these thou shalt not take,
The laurels, the palms and the paeon, the breasts of the nymph in the brake;
Breasts more soft than a dove’s, that tremble with tenderer breath;
And all the wings of the Loves, and all the joy before death;
All the feet of the hours that sound as a single lyre,
Dropped and deep in the flowers, with strings that flicker like fire.

³⁴ Epigrams of Straton deal largely with homosexual love. Lionel Johnson, ‘The Cultured Faun’ published anonymously in *Anti-Jacobin* (1891); repr. in *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890s*, ed. Karl Beckson (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1981), 110-13.

³⁵ Bush, *Mythology*, 356. For more recent scholarly works on Swinburne see Donald Thomas, *Swinburne: The Poet and his World* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, 1979); Rikky Rooksby and Nicholas Shrimpton, eds. *The Whole Music of Passion. New Essays on Swinburne* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1993). Margot K. Louis, *Swinburne and his Gods: The Roots and Growth of Agnostic Poetry* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990).

³⁶ Arthur Machen, *Far Off Things* (London: Martin Secker, 1922) repr. as *The Autobiography of Arthur Machen* (London: Garnstone Press, 1974), 60.

More than these wilt thou give, things fairer than all these things?
 Nay, for a little we live, and life hath mutable wings.
 A little while and we die; shall life not thrive as it may?
 For no man under the sky lives twice, outliving his day.
 And grief is a grievous thing, and a man hath enough of his tears:
 Why should he labour, and bring fresh grief to blacken his years?
 Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown grey from thy breath.³⁷

Swinburne's poetry as a whole was saturated with images of an ancient Greece and Rome in which he placed his sympathy, and he was often described as a pagan poet. Osbert Burdett commented that his 'blood still beat to the classical age, and he was the embodiment of the classical spirit'.³⁸ Arthur Lyttelton wrote that Swinburne enabled an understanding of the pagan horizon, pagan satisfaction with this world, and pagan weariness.³⁹ However, Swinburne used the ancients creatively and in a highly modern way. Bush has argued that his work is not classical paganism reborn but rather an intoxicating paganism that gave 'a fresh and powerful stimulus, and a whole new vocabulary, to the old conflict between Christianity and paganism'.⁴⁰

Poems and Ballads shot Swinburne to a position of notoriety because it was believed to transgress fundamental taboos and threaten to obliterate all moral and natural distinctions. Machen recorded how as a young man he first received the book: 'it was the denial of everything that I had been brought up to believe most sure and sacred; the book was positively strewn with the fragments of shattered altars and the torn limbs of kings and priests'.⁴¹ Swinburne's poetry was rife with expressions of sexual experiences and sexual perversities; for example, in 'Anactoria' he wrote 'that I could drink thy veins as wine, and eat thy breasts like honey' and in 'Dolores' he called to the 'Lady of Pain', 'For my heart too springs up at the pressure/ Mine eyelids too moisten and burn/ Ah, feed me and fill me with pleasure/ Ere pain come in turn'.⁴² This was plenty to excite the

³⁷ Charles Algernon Swinburne, 'Hymn to Proserpine' in *Poems and Ballads* (London: E. Moxon and Co, 1866).

³⁸ Osbert Burdett, *The Beardsley Period: An Essay in Perspective* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1925), 51.

³⁹ Arthur Lyttelton, *Modern Poets of Faith, Doubt and Paganism and Other Essays* (London: John Murray, 1904), 226.

⁴⁰ Bush, *Mythology*, 352.

⁴¹ Machen, *Autobiography*, 93.

⁴² Both poems were first published in *Poems and Ballads* (1866).

decadent blood and many aimed to emulate his 'fleshy' and sexually explicit lines. Thus the paganism of Swinburne encouraged an association with the sexual excesses of life.

The decadents revelled in the criticism levied at them. Reacting against Christian moral codes, they attacked Christian ideas of sin. However, rather than shaking off such notions they relished their operation within them: Puritan asceticism was made repulsive and Catholic Hell made desirable. Norman Vance argues that decadence came to positively enjoy the evil aspect of aesthetic experience and pushed it to the foreground.⁴³ Walter Pater perceived that many decadents experienced a 'luxury of disgust' in gazing on corruption which gave rise to a pleasurable squirm.⁴⁴ In *The Yellow Book* Arthur Symonds perverted a poem about the Virgin Mary into one about a street walker, with all the passions and sexual encounters that ensue.⁴⁵ Roger Fry dubbed Aubrey Beardsley 'the Fra Angelico of Satanism'⁴⁶ and Beardsley himself set out his one aim as the grotesque, stating 'if I am not grotesque I am nothing'.⁴⁷ Through this impulse, paganism was removed from its classical context and turned to as a ready-made parlour of counter-cultural images. By applying more rouge here and a little less there, paganism could be the opposite of modern morality and the epitome of decadent evil.

This can also be seen in the case of homosexuality. Here paganism became a symbol of homosexual society and the word 'pagan' was often used in literature to denote homosexual and little more. Scholars have previously highlighted this point. To list but two examples, Timothy D'Arch Smith has examined the work of Edmund John highlighting his use of 'pagan' to mean homosexual in the poem about his attraction to a boy acolyte: 'Yea, but thy wide eyes burned/ like stars above a pagan shrine/ and in them shone a gleam of pagan things';⁴⁸ similarly Linda Dowling has examined W.H. Mallock's *The New Republic* arguing that he seems to use Pater's fondness for specific classical

⁴³ Vance, *Victorians and Ancient Rome*, 248.

⁴⁴ Barry, 'Neo-Paganism', 301.

⁴⁵ 'Stella Maris' in *The Yellow Book*, Vol. 1 (April, 1894), 129-34.

⁴⁶ Derek Stanford, *The Purgatory and Paradise of Aubrey Beardsley* (Farnham: Typographeum, 1999), 9.

⁴⁷ Stanley Weintraub, *Aubrey Beardsley: Imp of the Perverse* (London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), 1.

⁴⁸ Timothy D'Arch Smith, *Love in Ernest: Some Notes on the Lives and Writings of English 'Uranian' Poets From 1889 to 1930* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), 180.

allusions as a way of suggesting his pagan, homoerotic, sexual preferences.⁴⁹ Wilde's 'Helas!' frankly connected images of homosexuality and paganism, but it was in 1895, through his trial for offences of homosexuality, that Wilde had a huge (albeit largely unwitting) impact on the use of the P-word.⁵⁰ His case attracted unprecedented amounts of attention from the newspapers and was easily the most written about story in April and May 1895. As the *Daily Chronicle* reported, the trials themselves were attended by 'sensation-mongers, foreigners, men about town, some bodies, anybodies, nobodies'.⁵¹ Newspapers employed the word 'pagan' when discussing the trial; for example, the *Daily Telegraphy* wrote that Wilde had imported 'the pagan side of bygone times' while a letter to the *Star* described Wilde as a practitioner of 'pagan viciousness'.⁵² Added to this, the court was read Wilde's letters to Lord Alfred Douglas, which included such lines as, 'Your slim gilt soul walks between passion and poetry. I know Hyacinthus, who Apollo loved so madly, was you in Greek days',⁵³ and in the dock Wilde stated that the realisation of oneself through pleasure was a Greek and pagan idea to which he conformed.⁵⁴ Thus reinforced and propagated by the trial, the word 'pagan' came to be banded about to represent the deviancy of homosexuality and decadence.

The condition of decadence and homosexuality was linked to ideas circulating at the time of a rising effeminacy and decline of the country. Although a discussion of European society in general, Max Nordau's seminal work, *Degeneration* (1892), made a significant impression on thought in England because his ideas seemed to resonate with what many English felt they were experiencing. Towards the end of the nineteenth century England was increasingly believed to be past her peak as a great empire and her vitality was perceived to be decaying. Nordau argued that those who feel such immanent perdition and extinction display mental irregularities which result in decadence, emotionalism, egoism, impulsiveness, pessimism and self-abhorrence. He asserted that

⁴⁹ Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality*, 107-8.

⁵⁰ For a detailed account of the Oscar Wilde trials see Richard Ellmann, *The Trial of Oscar Wilde* (London: Penguin, 1996).

⁵¹ *Daily Chronicle* (4 April, 1895).

⁵² *Daily Telegraphy* (6 April, 1895); *Star* (23 April, 1895); cited in Goodman, *Oscar Wilde File*, 76; 98.

⁵³ Cited in H. Montgomery Hyde, *Oscar Wilde: A Biography* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1976), 149.

⁵⁴ *The Trials of Oscar Wilde: Transcript Excerpts from the Trials at the Old Bailey, London, During April and May 1895*, ed. Tim Coates (London: The Stationary Office, 2001), 48.

these people become effeminate and a slave to their nerves such that they are unable to imbue the nation with the strength that it needs to resist decline. Thus he called for the return of 'men of muscle' to combat degeneration.⁵⁵ Barry had employed the same argument in his analysis of the perils of 'neo-paganism'. He wrote that the moral tone of society tends to sink when peacetime combines with increased riches because this has the effect of wrapping the idle and educated in a velvet cloak, allowing them to dream at ease. Thus decadence was seen as a product and cause of the decline of the nation and for decadence and paganism to be linked was to create a paganism that represented decline.

Theories propagated about the decline of nations took the form of inclusive and supposedly scientific theorising about the organic state of nations, allowing their application not only to nations and empires of the modern world but also to those at different times in history.⁵⁶ Indeed, Nordau and Barry both compared the modern situation to the decadence of the Roman Empire in decline. They argued that the Emperors were guilty of sloth and gluttony and, becoming effeminate, were unable to renew the Roman race. In making the comparison, critics could call decadence 'pagan' to imply a state of moral degeneracy with the fatal consequences as seen in the paganism of the Roman Empire. Paganism was depicted as a symptom of a disease and it was argued that no good could come from it. Francis Thompson described the paganism of decadence as that

of the days of Pliny, and Satius, and Juvenal; of much philosophy and little belief; of superb villas and superb taste; of banquets for the palate in the shape of cookery, and banquets for the eye in the shape of art; of poetry singing dead songs on dead themes with the most polished artistic vocalisation; of everything most polished, from the manners to the marble floors; of vice carefully drained out of sight, and large fountains of virtue springing in the open air.⁵⁷

He argued that since it is impossible to bring back the age when paganism was a faith, this version of corrupt paganism is the one which is exalted. He concluded that this is 'a most shining paganism as putrescence also shines'.

⁵⁵ Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (1892; trans. 1895; repr., London: Univeristy of Nebraska, 1993).

⁵⁶ See for example, Brook Adams, *The Law of Civilization and Decay* (London: Swan Sonnonschein, 1895).

⁵⁷ Francis Thompson, 'Paganism Old and New' in *Merry England*, 62 (June, 1888), 99-109, 108-9.

As was discussed in Chapter 2, mainstream late Victorian culture tried to distance itself from comparisons with ancient Rome and the Romans were increasingly depicted as dissimilar to the Victorians. However, in their desire to shock, this was precisely the type of paganism the decadents wanted and they encouraged the link to Roman decadence. They did not try to make Roman decadence respectable in response to the critics' attack but instead augmented and emphasised the indulgence, excess and depravity achieved by the late Romans. Swinburne began this trend as early as 1862, writing of the moral deviancy and perverse sexual cruelty of the consort of Marcus Aurelius in his poem 'Faustine': 'She loved the games men play with death/ Where death must win/ As though the slain man's blood and breath/ Revived Faustine.'⁵⁸ Into the 1890s, the decadents felt that they were living in a period in which similar things excited the blood. For example, Arthur Symons wrote that the 1890s 'has all the qualities that mark the end of great periods, the qualities that we find in the Greek and the Latin decadence; an intense self-consciousness, a restless curiosity, an over-subtilising refinement upon refinement, a spiritual and moral perversity' and saw this as a 'beautiful and interesting disease'.⁵⁹ The decadents exalted Nero, that most hated Christian-killing Emperor, marking him as a cultural hero because of the new and curious sensibility he brought to a declining age. Beardsley relished Nero's assault on the early Christians, describing that he set them on fire 'like a large tallow of candles; the only light that Christians have ever been known to give'.⁶⁰ Wilde expressed his great esteem for Nero by having his hair cut in the same style as the Emperor.⁶¹ For Wilde, ancient Rome could be experienced in the modern age by a mixture of inebriation and decadent art. He wrote a letter of praise to Beardsley: 'when I have one of your drawings I want to drink absinthe...and then I can live myself back in imperial Rome, in the Rome of the late Caesars'.⁶²

⁵⁸ *Spectator* (31 May, 1862); repr. in *Poems and Ballads*.

⁵⁹ Arthur Symons, *Harpers Monthly Magazine* (November, 1893); cited in Jackson, *Eighteen Nineties*, 55.

⁶⁰ Aubrey Beardsley, 'Table Talk' in *In Black and White. The Literary Remains of Aubrey Beardsley*, eds. Stephen Calloway and David Colvin (London: Cypher, 1998), 132.

⁶¹ Vance, *Victorians and Ancient Rome*, 258.

⁶² Weintraub, *Beardsley*, 62.

In literature, a Rome of moral decay and decline was increasingly portrayed with dark allure. Norman Hapgood's protagonist Henri Beyle saw the Romans as 'a great evil for humanity, a deadly disease which retarded the civilisation of the world' and yet confessed 'in spite of so many wrongs, my heart is for the Romans'.⁶³ George Moore's thinly disguised autobiographical novel describes a young decadent, Edward Dayne, who decides to live his life 'on a purely pagan basis' since it was 'the great world of marble and pomp and lust and cruelty that my soul goes out to and hails as the greatest'.⁶⁴ Similarly, a decade later, Norma Larimer's pagan anti-heroine, Marion Houston, hungers 'to grasp anything that moves my blood' and is infatuated with the cruel splendour of ancient Rome. Houston describes,

I know nothing about history...but I love reading about people of unrestrained passions and power. Caligula with his mania for cruelty, Agrippina with her fierce ambition, Nero with his inordinate vanity and love of beauty, pandered to by unlimited power; and the worst scenes in the French Revolution I adore.⁶⁵

Therefore, paganism often became equated with images of the very worst and morally depraved side of Roman civilisation. The decadents and its critics were playing the same game with paganism; both presented it as the dangerously real and potent negation of all that modern society stood for.

This type of paganism possesses an inbuilt pessimism. Barry described neo-paganism as 'the intoxication and awakening, the defiance which modulates into despair, and the despair which would fain lose itself in a never-ending whirl of passion'. Most fundamentally, ideas of decadence centred round perceptions of living and working in a secondary and tarnished age. Decadent literature was criticised as such. Barry asserted that the decadent 'neo-pagan' merely copies and feeds upon the leaving of other ages. In this context, while Imperial Rome as another and similar secondary age felt very near, the age of early ancient Greece felt very far. Ancient Greece was perceived as a golden first age, suffering from none of the tarnishing and experiencing only the bold, new, and

⁶³ *The Yellow Book*, Vol. 4 (January, 1895), 207-13.

⁶⁴ George Moore, *Confessions of a Young Man* (London: William Heinemann, 1886), 52; 117.

⁶⁵ Norma Larimer, *The Pagan Woman* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1907), 67.

idyllic. When the headstrong defiance of the decadents was let go, a further paganism could emerge from literary creativity - that of literary dreaming about an Arcadian perfection. This was a more insular mode of dissatisfaction; it manifested itself not in the form of immanent social threat but as a vision of joy, to be experienced in the traditional literary realm of the mind and emotions. Indeed, sentiments of disaffection with a modern and drained world were felt not just by the decadents, but by many in the Victorian and Edwardian world. Forrest Reid described such feeling as living in a 'kingdom of twilight': 'We are in the twilight of our world...the spirit of sunlight no longer, as in the golden days of Athens, shines through our work, our art, our life. Our beauty is built up of mystery and silence – a beauty of pale women seen somewhere in the shadow-land'.⁶⁶ Thus located in this dream world, modern yearning and images of paganism infiltrated the arts whether strictly 'decadent' or not.

Let us first examine two key works which called themselves 'pagan'. In 1893 a mild-mannered bank clerk who had had several short prose works published in W.E. Henley's *National Observer* collected his works together into a single volume and named it *Pagan Papers*.⁶⁷ This was the first book to be published by the later literary giant, Kenneth Grahame. The Bookman reviewer commented that the stories show Grahame's 'belief in the joy of life'.⁶⁸ The stories were in fact mostly about lost pagan joy and rural frolics. In *Pagan Papers* Grahame lamented the state of the modern world and made joy a key feature of his paganism. Intrinsic in this step was Grahame's revolt against the Puritanism – or in his own words, the 'Scotch-Calvinist-devil-worship'⁶⁹ – of his upbringing. Puritanism represented everything grey, constricting, and authoritarian for Grahame and so it was natural that his dreams of a pagan alternative should be the antithesis. His childhood experience of Puritanism haunted him throughout his life and work. For example, in 'An Autumn Encounter' a scarecrow pointing to the sky immediately summons up images of judgement for the narrator, who describes that he

⁶⁶ Forrest Reid, *The Kingdom of Twilight* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1904), 234.

⁶⁷ Kenneth Grahame, *Pagan Papers* (London: Bodley Head, 1893).

⁶⁸ Bookman reviewer comment used to advertise *Pagan Papers* in Kenneth Grahame's *Dream Days* (London: John Lane, 1898).

⁶⁹ Letter to Miss Bradley 22 December 1904, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Papers of Kenneth Grahame, MS.Eng.misc.d.527.

can almost hear the scarecrow rasping, 'Salvation, damnation, damnation, salvation!' It is little wonder the *National Observer* was an attractive place for Grahame to publish. Henley, though pro-Tory and against the practical radical or socialist, hated everything Puritan and published the magazine under a banner denouncing the unholy trio 'Puritanism, Labour and Humbug'.

For Grahame, the modern world existed as 'unblest days of hurry', where industrialisation rendered iron replacing muscle so that 'the kindly life-blood is apt to throb dull as the measured beat of the steam-engine'. In 'Deus Terminus' Grahame depicts humanity which first in Roman times and now in the modern world has evolved the god Terminus – a practical, 'matter-of-fact deity' who fetters the mind and represents possession and domination. Grahame writes that this was the way the old enchantment of the sylvan glories had gone such that 'we are left with naught but a vague lingering tradition of the happier days before the advent of the ruthless deity'. Moreover, the Roman version of Terminus is described as far better than his modern counterpart: 'His simple rites were performed amid flowers and under blue sky, by sunny road or tranquil waters'; whereas the modern god has 'the shrieking sulphurous houses of damnation erected as temples in his honour...mid clangour, dirt and pestilence of crowding humanity, there [where] the very spirit of worry and unrest sits embodied'.

In 'The Lost Centaur', Grahame writes that the modern world has taken a wrong turn along the way and has forgotten man's affinity with nature. He argues that a 'declension' is needed to rediscover the joys and natural ease that the ancients knew but laments that the opportunity to mend the cleavage between body and soul is probably long since lost. However, few of the works posit no hope for humanity. In 'Orion', Grahame denounces Christian theories of Original Sin as the mere nomenclature of parents and pulpiteers who, regrettably, presently hold power. He explains that although the modern world has 'stifled and gagged' ancient joy, 'it still lives, it breathes, it lurks, it will up and out when 'tis looked for least' and gives an anecdotal example of a stockbroker who on holiday from the city, had been partially caught by this budding ancient pulse. The ancient time of which Grahame dreams is a return to hunter-gatherer ways: a time 'where freedom is, and you can wander and breathe, and at night time street

lamps there are none – only hunter’s fires, and the eyes of lions, and the mysterious stars’. Grahame located paganism in the present world, but on the fringes of society. This can also be seen in ‘A Bohemian in Exile’ in which he writes of the existence of a remnant of faithful pagans who continue the worship the old gods in the hills and caves. He emphasises the importance of place in his idea that ‘two Englands’ exist, one which can be reached by the railway and one which is untouched by railways, containing therein the ‘spell of free untrammelled life’. Grahame develops this image in the ‘The Rural Pan’ which we shall examine later below.

The second key publication to be examined is *The Pagan Review* (1892). The first and only volume of the Review contained six short stories and poems, plus a foreword by its ‘editor’ which expounded its aim at expressing pagan sentiment. The entire contents of the Review were in fact written, under different pseudonyms, by William Sharp. Sharp had previously attracted attention by the publication of a collection of poems entitled *Sospiri di Roma* (1890). In the poem, ‘The Fallen Goddess,’ about a statue of Venus now being used in a church as a Madonna, Sharp used rich Swinburnian tones to express the dichotomy between paganism and Christianity. Rather than being housed in a sorrowful Church, the goddess should be:

Stood where the myrtles and roses were blooming
 Stood where the dayshine was rising and flooding
 Up from the purple-blue flower of the ocean
 Flooding and rising till all of the inland
 Glowed in the splendour, and valley and mountain
 Laughed with the joy of the world’s young laughter.

Her doom, Sharp expresses, was: ‘The passing of all/ The joyous gods/ And slowly, slowly/ Across the world/ The chilling shadow/ Fall of the Cross...’⁷⁰

In the foreword to *The Pagan Review*, Sharp conceded that many of the terms and images associated with paganism are misleading and yet argued that ‘with most of us, there is a fairly definite idea of what we signify thereby’. He asserted that this was essentially a belief that ‘the religion of the forefathers ceased for us personally’ and the consequent feeling that ‘a new epoch is about to be inaugurated’. Sharp wrote confidently

⁷⁰ ‘The Fallen Goddess’ in *Sospiri di Roma* (Rome: 1891).

about an undiscovered community of like-minded ‘pagans’ presently living in England.⁷¹ We can perhaps see this confidence manifest in his decision to make the publication the first issue of a journal rather than a book of his collected works. In a collection of his memoirs, his wife commented that he had to write all the articles himself because he had no contributors and needed to attract them.⁷² However, as we know through his later guise as ‘Fiona Macleod’, Sharp was not adverse to pseudonyms and may have chosen the journal format both to conceal and further his literary ambitions. Unfortunately for Sharp, Macleod’s literary prowess was not evident in the Review and it met with coarse criticism, one reviewer exclaiming it was not pagan ‘unless paganism be a conscious revolt against the English language’.⁷³ It was probably this poor standard of writing which, more than any other factor, prevented the Review from attracting contributors and running to a second issue.

Nevertheless, in issue one, Sharp triumphantly asserted, ‘it is life that we preach...life to the full, in all its manifestations, in its heights and depths, precious to the uttermost moment, not to be battered even when maimed and weary’.⁷⁴ The literature in the Review followed this emphasis on pagan enjoyment of life. The literary historian, Flavia Alaya, has argued that ‘pagan joy’ is the ‘most apparent and laudable characteristic’ of Sharp’s writing *per se*.⁷⁵ In the unfinished poem, ‘Dionysos in India’ Sharp portrays Dionysos as the god of joyousness, the god who brought joy to people in ancient times but who through some wild disaster has been severed from the modern world. He wrote in his diary that he intended to write an epilogue describing Dionysos’s future return to the world and thus the restoration of joy.⁷⁶ In the short story entitled ‘The Pagans: A Romance’ Sharp tells the story of two lovers. Quite why they are ‘pagan’ in the classical sense is unclear but Sharp uses the word to stand for their joy, love and freedom, with plentiful sunshine and the girl’s apparent southern features perhaps to back up the link.

⁷¹ ‘Foreword’ to *The Pagan Review* (Rudgwick: W.H. Brooks, 1892), 1-4.

⁷² Elizabeth A. Sharp, ed. *William Sharp: A Memoir* (London: William Heinemann, 1910), 200.

⁷³ ‘The Pagan Review’ in *Saturday Review*, Vol. 74 (3 September, 1892), 268-9, 268.

⁷⁴ *Pagan Review*, 4.

⁷⁵ Alaya, *William Sharp*, 161.

⁷⁶ *Sharp: A Memoir*, 171.

The Pagan Review also made sensual and sexual pleasure a key theme and contained much that was based round the erotic. A friend commented on the risqué themes, writing to Sharp, 'I think you will have to put some more clothes on before the end of the year'.⁷⁷ Sharp argued in the foreword of the Review that the 'supreme interest of man is woman and the most profound and fascinating problem to women is men' and so claimed that since literature is about men and women, it is only natural that it should be 'dominated by various forces of sexual emotion'. Although admitting that such emphasis could render writing blind to other aspects of the life of the body and soul, he expresses a hope for an abolition of division between the sexes and the reinstatement of sexual union as the flower of human life.⁷⁸ The story, 'The Black Madonna', portrays the carnal love of a man for a goddess and 'The Coming of Love' describes a love that is both 'mad and wild'. 'The Rape of the Sabines' describes the conspiracy of Simone and Gregorio to take the virginity of two Sabine women on the night before their marriages, but which ultimately ends with their own death. Guido, a young boy who plays the two sides off against each other, somewhat orchestrating the debacle, is described at the end of the story as a kind of Pan figure, seen 'leaping and running away like a goat' to soft notes of the flute. The story, 'The Oread', is also centred on the links between paganism and sexuality; a 'civilised' man chases a naked female woodland nymph and comes to realise that in order to catch her he must remove his clothes.

Sharp had written of sexual pleasure and its links to paganism previously in *Sospiri di Roma*. *Sospiri* had caused much outrage for its 'nude sensuousness'⁷⁹ and Alaya argues that the Review was in many ways a device for baiting the prudish critics who had so condemned it.⁸⁰ With lines such as 'O whispers of joy/ O breaths of passion/ O sighs of longing'⁸¹ and images like the naked horse-rider with his 'strong white arms/ The broad heaving breast/ The tent thighs guiding/ The mighty stallion',⁸² it is little wonder Sharp caused the staunch Victorian mindset some discomfort. Alaya argues that

⁷⁷ Letter from Richard Whiteing in *Sharp: A Memoir*, 204.

⁷⁸ *Pagan Review*, 3.

⁷⁹ *Sharp: A Memoir*, 185.

⁸⁰ Alaya, *William Sharp*, 103

⁸¹ 'Ultimo Sospiro' in *Sospiri di Roma*, 182-3.

⁸² 'The Naked Rider' in *Ibid.*, 169-71.

Sospiri was criticised especially for its allusions to ‘pagan water activities’ in the poem ‘The Bather’.⁸³ Indeed, as we saw in the previous chapter, bathing was often linked to images of paganism. Sharp’s poem describes a beautiful naked bather and includes sexual references such as, ‘Moveth and swayeth/ With tremulous joy’ and ‘White gleaming body...Passeth a quiver’. Since the volume was written while in Rome and directly highlights its link to Rome in the title, critics often took the poem as a hint that Sharp partook in such activities whilst in Rome. They perhaps assumed correctly; in his diary Sharp wrote passionately about the electrifying effects Rome had on both his mind and body and how ‘in the midst of it came my old savage longing for a vagrant life and freedom from bondage’.⁸⁴

Connotations of water activities with sexual implication reached their apex in Aubrey Beardsley’s *Venus and Tännhauser*,⁸⁵ a work which the author intended to be ‘quite the most decadent thing that had ever been written’.⁸⁶ In the seventh chapter, Tännhauser entices his young boy attendants to bathe with him and an exchange of sexual, ‘quasi-amorous’ acts ensues. The sexual and homosexual descriptions are unmistakable. As a leading decadent, Beardsley’s story further shaped ideas about paganism as sensual and sexual. In the same year as the first chapters of Beardsley’s book were published, Sharp wrote about Samuel Pepys, describing him as ‘the famous chronicler and incurable old pagan’ thus using the word ‘pagan’ directly to describe sensual pleasure and carnal love.⁸⁷ Later in the year, a close friend of Sharp’s, Mr. Janvier, used the word ‘pagan’ in correspondence with Sharp to denote fleshy, sensuous literature, commenting that in Sharp’s recent work, ‘The Washer of the Ford’, ‘the pagan element had been subordinated’ meaning that his work had been lifted ‘from the flesh-level to the soul-level’.⁸⁸

⁸³ Alaya, *William Sharp*, 101.

⁸⁴ *Sharp: A Memoir*, 188.

⁸⁵ The first four chapters were initially printed under the title ‘Under the Hill’ in *The Savoy* (January to April 1896). The work was never finished but in 1907 Leonard Smithers privately issued ten completed chapters by Beardsley with its originally intended title, *Venus and Tännhauser*.

⁸⁶ According to Arthur Symonds ‘Beardsley as a Man of Letters’ in *Saturday Review* (9 January, 1904), 41-2.

⁸⁷ William Sharp, *Ecce Puella and Other Prose Imaginings* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1896). 32.

⁸⁸ Letter from Mr. T.A. Janvier 22 June, 1896 *Sharp: A Memoir*, 264-5.

Grahame did not use the word 'pagan' in a similar fashion but his volume did cause some initial alarm. Firstly, this was because the P-word was increasingly gaining an unsavoury reputation and volumes employing the word were regarded with caution. Reviewers of *Pagan Papers* felt it necessary to emphasise that the volume did not contain anything too untoward. A reviewer for the *Literary Echo* feared that Grahame's title may 'deter readers with growing families, from making their acquaintance.'⁸⁹ A reviewer for *The Critic* wrote that Grahame may pose as an 'unregenerate child of Nature' but in fact 'had every appearance of respectability'.⁹⁰ *The Scotsman* similarly reported that the publication was morally sound so that 'anyone who likes showy pictorial writing may read *Pagan Papers* with pleasure'. The reviewer noted, almost as an after-thought, that 'they do not manifestly appear to be the work of a Christian'.⁹¹ Secondly, early editions of *Pagan Papers* carried a frontispiece depicting the god Pan drawn by Aubrey Beardsley. As we shall see in the discussion of Beardsley's work below, this association cannot be seen as a meeting of minds; the association of the book with Beardsley neither then nor now seems to fit comfortably with Grahame's prose. Both points should perhaps be perceived primarily a sales technique, most likely at the instigation of its infamous publisher John Lane.

Grahame is the exception rather than the rule in his use of a virtually child-friendly paganism. A short survey of the literature produced by minor poets and writers reveals that most employed paganism and the P-word provocatively to denote the joy of life, including amorous passions. Minor poets undoubtedly glamorised and exalted pagan Greece. For example, Grahame's biographer, Patrick R. Chalmers, dreamed that the 'divine Athenian days' were those of 'Cool marble courts are ringing/ As merry voices call/ Where girls are garland-stringing/ For Springtime's festival'.⁹² John Gould Fletcher wrote of the bacchanalian revelry of the golden age whereby 'The gods upon Olympus with ambrosia pelt the sky/ While tossed about out laughing throng the orange-blossoms

⁸⁹ Repr. in Patrick R. Chalmers, *Kenneth Grahame: Life, Letters and Unpublished Work* (London: Methuen, 1933), 57-8.

⁹⁰ *The Critic*, Vol. 34 (1899); cited in Green, *Kenneth Grahame*, 54.

⁹¹ Repr. in Chalmers, *Kenneth Grahame*, 58.

⁹² 'A Classical Contrast' in Patrick R. Chalmers, *Green Days and Blue Days* (London: Maunsell and Co, 1912).

fly/ And asphodels are flying 'mong the shades so pale and grey/ For all have drunk the ruby wine, the wine we drink today'.⁹³ For Beatrice Irwin, in her volume of verse entitled *The Pagan Trinity*, 'the joy of Pan, and Ceres' close intents/ Inspire us to Olympian heights of bliss!/ Ah Love! the stars are waiting but for this'; and she salutes ancient Greece, 'Hail, Spirit that owned Beauty's power! All Hail/ With joy thou didst achieve. We strive, and fail!'⁹⁴ Amy Skovgaard-Pedersen also felt the word 'pagan' apt for her slim volume of poetry. Her opening poem calls for the ancient Greek times of 'golden days and purple nights' to return and asserts a belief that 'the gods are not yet dead'.⁹⁵

Writing under the pseudonym 'Paganus', L. Cranmer-Byng produced a book of verse entitled *Poems of Paganism* (1895). The most interesting poem in this context is 'Christian and Pagan' in which the Pagan rejects a Christian Heaven. For the Pagan, Christian ideas are doubly unattractive: firstly the Christian misses out on enjoying physical passion during life; secondly Heaven would be such that

Each fond embrace is a dire disgrace,
With the eyes of God above,
And the saints would blush, and His voice said: 'Hush!
Ye must put away your love.'

Calm, cold, and pure, ye may endure;
Yet passion shall pine with drouth
For love's fair form, and the kisses warm
Of her beautiful burning mouth.⁹⁶

Other poems in the volume largely focus on physical love (indeed, the alternative title for the volume is, 'Songs of Life and Love'), undoubtedly to the distaste of the Victorian palette. In 'Love Beyond Law' he writes of a mad and divine love killed by the convention of marriage and in 'Passion's Pastoral' he describes a 'delicious drowsiness' experienced after sexual stupor as the 'calm content, as when some deity/ Nods in Olympus o'er his nectar wine/ And folds the nymph he panted to possess/ Unto his

⁹³ 'The Bacchanal' in John Gould Fletcher, *The Book of Nature (1910-1912)* (London: Constable and Co, 1913).

⁹⁴ 'Eleusinies' and 'Paeon' in Beatrice Irwin, *The Pagan Trinity* (London: John Lane, 1912).

⁹⁵ 'Lament of Sappho to Atthis' in Amy Skovgaard-Pedersen, *Pagan: A Book of Verse* (London: A.C. Fifield, 1914).

⁹⁶ 'Christian and Pagan' in 'Paganus' - L. Cranmer-Byng, *Poems of Paganism (Or, Songs of Life and Love)* (London: Roxburghe Press, 1895).

bosom'. Thus, in poetry, paganism was linked to joy and sexual passion. The ancients themselves did not even have to play a large role; George Moore's *Pagan Poems* does not appear to have any direct classical reference, but its major theme is sensual love.⁹⁷

The same is true for minor writers of prose. For example, Hamish Hendry in a piece entitled 'The Pagan Moon' published in the *Saturday Review* (1898) used the word in the context of love. He wrote of 'a warm enticing moon; a moon for straying lovers' a moon both ancient and fresh, and one which uttered the triple cry of 'love, love, love'. He stressed that the 'amorous night' of which he speaks is not upon some hot field in Syria but in an English lane where 'for a moment the English prudishness is pushed away with the church-spires into the out-lying dark'. He argued that the moon will come and rule again and even now she has her devotees who 'make themselves narrow altars on the field stiles; they pass in procession slowly, with twinning arms, through the green-vaulted lane; they loiter to bestow the kiss of love where the blossom in the hedge, hangs silver wreaths in the moonlight'.⁹⁸

The P-word was also employed by minor writers in titles of full-length novels. Norma Larimer in *The Pagan Woman* (1907) probably gives us the most robust pagan, Marion Houston (whom we have glimpsed earlier). As one character describes, quite frightened by Marion's passion, she was

a pagan as the ancients understood the word – a pagan in the sense that her duty towards life and religion is the joy of livin', the worship of beauty. It's all in direct opposition to the Church; she's a rebirth of the Hellenic spirit - ye can't make her see anythin' but the vainglory and hypocrisy of self-sacrifice and renunciation.⁹⁹

George Samson's *The Pagan* (1909) centres round Maisie Brownslow, a pagan whose paganism is passive until awakened by a physical relationship with Herbert Trevanian. Significantly, she experiences physical love without regret or constraint but, while the author hints it was good while it lasted, the story ends with doom. Their 'pagan philosophies' are ultimately revealed to be mere 'bottled moonshine – spawned on that romantic island of mirage – where Old Experience was known a liar, Wrong-reason

⁹⁷ George Moore, *Pagan Poems* (London: Newman and Co., 1881).

⁹⁸ Hamish Hendry, 'The Pagan Moon' in *Saturday Review* (25 June, 1898), 841.

⁹⁹ Larimer, *Pagan Woman*, 145.

triumphed, and all were vaunted free'.¹⁰⁰ The pagan of Louis Vintras's novel *A Pagan Soul* (1896) meets with a happy end, but only because she realises the error of her ways and turns to Christ. Vintras describes his pagan as 'pagan by instinct', not necessarily reprobate but containing heightened passions dangerous in a modern world which 'does not like to be disturbed by strong emotions'.¹⁰¹ Again, paganism is manifest in physical desire, the woman loving male beauty through the flesh rather than through the spirit. The fact that women more often than men appear as the pagan protagonist perhaps emphasises the equation of paganism with love. Women were traditionally thought to be more persuasive to the power of love than men but at the same time there was also a strong fear of the dominant sexual female.

Thus the word 'pagan' came to be transformed into a multifunctional symbol. Pumping images of paganism through literature meant that more emphasis could be placed on ideas of ancient joy, freedom, and sexuality and less concern was needed for the actual facts (or at least the formal academic perceptions) of ancient life. However, this was all in danger of representing paganism not just as anti-Christian but against any kind of religion whatsoever. Such sentiments can be seen in the way in which some whom employed the word 'pagan' in their work felt it necessary to attach health warnings. Annie Catherine Randall was keen to reiterate in *Pagan Pearls*, a collection of wisdom from Greece, Rome, India and China that the book is for those seeking god: 'scarcely could the editor dare attempt to throw around the neck of modern materialism any such rosary of 'Pagan Pearls'.¹⁰² The American minor poet, Franklin Henry Giddings felt the need to explain that he chose the title *Pagan Poems*

not with irreligious intent – quite the contrary. It is chosen to emphasize that inextinguishable "faith in the possibilities of life" which has come down to us through all the religions of the world, from the earliest fears and hopes of the human heart, the earliest questionings of the human mind.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ George Samson, *The Pagan: A Novel* (London: John Oseley, 1909), 126.

¹⁰¹ Louis Vintras, *A Pagan Soul* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1896), 57-9.

¹⁰² 'Preface' to Annie Catherine Randall (selected and arranged), *Pagan Pearls: A Book of Paraphrases* (London: Elliot Stock, 1887).

¹⁰³ Cover sheet to Franklin Henry Giddings, *Pagan Poems* (New York: MacMillan, 1914).

Similarly in a chapter entitled 'The Making of a Pagan', Constance Clyde in *A Pagan's Love* describes a man coming to paganism through a loss of faith in Christianity but points out that 'this pagan abhorred atheism'.¹⁰⁴

If writers of paganism could avert denunciations of irreligion, they could not do the same against attacks of distortion. Critics frequently condemned literary representations of paganism for their flowery approach. Chesterton argued that while Lowes Dickinson's version of paganism was at least worthy of debate, the paganism preached by Swinburne and Pater never bore any resemblance to ancient paganism. He wrote that in literature pagans are represented as 'continually crowning themselves with flowers and dancing about in an irresponsible state...as inebriate and lawless whereas they were above all things reasonable and respectable'.¹⁰⁵ Francis Thompson argued that 'pagan paganism was not poetical' as modern perceivers of paganism seemed to declare it was.¹⁰⁶ Barry wrote that the decadents depicted an 'aesthetic, scientific, curled and scented paganism' which was merely 'academic and artificial'.¹⁰⁷ A critic of *The Pagan Review*, writing in the *Saturday Review* asserted,

Real paganism to the modern Neo-Pagan would have seemed Tory in politics, bald in art, and unadventurous in morals...The Neo-Pagan is a revival of the young man whom Aristophanes particularly detested. If the New Pagan had any knowledge of the old paganism he would choose for himself some other nickname...There is no better cure for the errors of Neo-Paganism than a study of the old pagans, Homer, Sophocles, Virgil. They, not Verlaine, not even Meredith, not even 'Beaudelaire' (as the Pagan Review calls that author, who himself smote the Neo-Pagans in a memorable essay) are the guidelines to follow.¹⁰⁸

Baudelaire's essay of 1852, to which the reviewer is alluding, asserted that modern pagan literature is mere 'pastiche' and places the burden of responsibility for this 'excessive paganism' largely at the feet of the romantic poet, Heinrich Heine.¹⁰⁹ Sharp, who wrote a biography on the life and work of Heine and was certainly heavily influenced by him, perhaps falls into this trap. Heine's legacy was largely perceived to be a genuine revolt

¹⁰⁴ Constance Clyde, *A Pagan's Love* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1905), Chapter 10 'The Making of a Pagan'.

¹⁰⁵ Chesterton, *Heretics*, 153.

¹⁰⁶ Thompson, 'Paganism Old and New', 99-109, 101.

¹⁰⁷ Barry, 'Neo-Paganism', 301.

¹⁰⁸ *Saturday Review* (3 September, 1892), 269.

¹⁰⁹ 'The Pagan School' in *La Semaine Theatre* (28 January, 1852); repr. in *Baudelaire As Literary Critic*, ed. and trans. L.B. Hyslop and F.E. Hyslop (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1964), 71-7.

against Christianity but an artificial leaning to a restored Hellenism. One reviewer of Heine, writing in 1889, worried that through Heine's work one cannot decide whether 'Romantic poetry [was] a mere dead Christianity decked with flowers' or whether 'the old Greeks, with their worship of sensuous beauty and their "cancerous vices" [are] to live again'.¹¹⁰

As we have seen, Arthur Machen too levied criticism at the use of paganism in literature. He wrote that pagans were inaccurately seen as 'men living in a kind of Abbey of Thelema doing what they would, satisfying the flesh according to their desires, devoid of morals altogether'. He argued that it was not all garlands and dances and that 'paganism, in its pure and uncorrupted state, was, evidently a good deal more than an elegant and poetic Bank Holiday, a perpetual riot, a rosy debauch'.¹¹¹ Instead, he asserted that it was much more austere, the nearest modern equivalent being Calvinism: 'the Oedipus Tyrannus is nothing but the doctrine of predestination set to solemn music...[paganism] is Calvinism in marble; and judgement and inexorable vengeance on guilty sinners are sung on choral odes'.¹¹² This was the precise opposite of the paganism of Grahame. His was an ancient paradise of rusticity, simplicity, innocence and youth, and the antithesis of over-bearing authority. Moreover, his paganism both preceded civilisation and was able to exist with it side by side, un-impacted and operating virtually in a different dimension. Through a literary approach, Grahame was able to negotiate a paganism which satisfied his criterion for its use. Indeed, Grahame also cultivated a separate image around the theme of paganism. In *The Golden Age* (1895) and *Dream Days* (1898), Grahame dubs adults the 'Olympians'. This description is by no means intended to flatter. Grahame did not esteem the authority of the Olympians (whether ancient or modern), instead exposing them as decidedly un-godlike, living in a dull world of self-made absurdity, ingrained with materialism and petty-mindedness. Thus he separates paganism into images of a highly primitive, rural paganism and images of a later paganism of grown-up Athenians. The former is the paganism of his heart whereas the latter is an image which instead exists more as a dystopia.

¹¹⁰ 'Heinrich Heine' in *Quarterly Review*, 169 (1889), 421-30.

¹¹¹ Arthur Machen, *On Paganism* (New York: Nicholas Brown, 1924), 1.

¹¹² Machen, *Autobiography*, 60.

E.M. Forster similarly separated paganism out into two images. In his novels, the intellectual Hellenists are frequently described as divorced from the truth of the ancient knowledge which they pretend to know, whereas the young and active homosexuals are depicted as the true inheritors of ancient Greece. For example, in *Maurice* (1914) although Clive has a deep classical learning, he finds Greece moribund as his homosexuality slips away. In contrast, Maurice turns away from his intellectual friends and discovers in Alec Scudder what is described to be the true Hellenic spirit. Forster's perception of Scudder is similar to Edward Carpenter's fondness for the lowest of society for their nearness to paganism and Forster was probably influenced by Carpenter and George Merrill in this.¹¹³ However, Forster allows the more 'irresponsible' forces in sexual matters to be unleashed. He resists the asceticism of Plato in homosexual relations and instead turns to images of a sensual, chthonic pre-Platonic Greece. Forster's images were influenced by the romantic anthropologists. As we have examined, ideas of a very early ancient Greece reached an interesting apex in the work of Jane Ellen Harrison. She placed emphasis not on the ancient Greece of the Olympians but on the ancient Greece of the most primitive, characterised by ecstasy, freedom, and natural instinct. Added to the work of Sir James Frazer, such primitiveness seemed the preserve not just of ancient history but of uncivilised peoples throughout the globe. Rather than the ancient Greeks appearing as civilised Victorians clothed in white robes, emphasis was on their ancient rusticity so that they appeared anything other than Victorian. Such images of the rusticity of the ancient Greeks were not particularly far removed from the images employed to describe English country folk as developed in the tradition of rural literature, for example in the work of Thomas Hardy. While paganism in literature did not concern itself with presenting a factual image of ancient Greece, its images of paganism were not completely divorced from wider trends in classical scholarship, both influencing and being influenced by the impact of the romantic anthropologists.

These trends in images of paganism in literature can be particularly seen in the use of the Pan-motif. Indeed, while the great Athenian gods were often pushed out of

¹¹³ For influence of Edward Carpenter on Forster see 'Terminal Note' to *Maurice*.

literature, there was ample room for the lesser Greek god, Pan. Hundreds of poems were written about Pan and collections of poetry often used his name in their title whether they actually referred to Pan himself or not.¹¹⁴ In E.M. Forster's *The Longest Journey* (1907) the young Rickie feels that it is only natural to name his first collection of poems 'Pan's Pipes' while Rickie's half-brother Stephen asks Mr Pembroke, 'are you sure *Pan's Pipes* hasn't been used up already?'¹¹⁵ The resurgence of interest in Pan did not go unnoticed at the time. For example, Richard Le Gallienne labelled Pan the 'father of the poets'¹¹⁶ and Robert Louis Stevenson commented that Pan 'is not dead for youth and all ductile and congenial minds, but of all the classical hierarchy alone survives in triumph'.¹¹⁷

Similarly, this is not a phenomenon that has gone unnoticed in modern scholarly circles. In 1969, the literary scholar Patricia Merivale published a full length academic study of Pan in modern times.¹¹⁸ More recently, papers and chapters have been published by scholars from various disciplines, including Hutton, the archaeologist John Boardman, and the literary scholars Robert Dingley, William Greenslade, and Nicholas Freeman.¹¹⁹ As can be seen, the majority of scholarship has come from the field of English literature; the discussion of Pan below attempts to address this balance. Merivale's examination of Pan is undoubtedly highly valuable and influential but, taking the form of purely literary analysis, does not engage in historical enquiry into the social and cultural climate of the time. Later papers often attempt to adopt a multi-disciplined approach; however gaps in

¹¹⁴ For a detailed bibliography of Pan in poetry see Douglas Bush's Appendix in *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition*, 560-70; and Helen H. Law, *Bibliography of Greek Myth in English Poetry* (Folcroft, PA: Folcroft Library Edition, 1955). However, neither list is complete; such is the volume of poetry in consideration.

¹¹⁵ E.M. Forster, *The Longest Journey* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1907; repr., London: Penguin books, 1995), 406. The uneducated Stephen is also himself a representation of Pan.

¹¹⁶ Richard Le Gallienne, *Attitudes and Avowals* (London: John Lane, 1910), 19.

¹¹⁷ Stevenson, 'Pan's Pipes', 149.

¹¹⁸ Patricia Merivale, *Pan the Goat God: His Myth in Modern Times* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1969).

¹¹⁹ Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*; John Boardman, *The Great God Pan: The Survival of an Image* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997); Robert Dingley, 'Meaning Everything: The Image of Pan at the Turn of the Century' in *Twentieth Century Fantasists: Culture, Society and Belief in Twentieth-Century Fantasy Literature*, ed. Kath Filmer (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), 47-59; William Greenslade, "'Pan" and the Open Road: Critical Paganism in R.L. Stevenson, Kenneth Grahame, Edward Thomas and E.M. Forster' in *Outside Modernism: In Pursuit of the English Novel 1900-1930*, eds. Lynne Hapgood and N.L. Patton (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 145-61; Nicholas Freeman, "'Nothing of the Wild Wood'": Pan, Paganism and Spiritual Confusion in E.F. Benson's "The Man Who Went Too Far" in *Literature & Theology*, Vol. 19, No.1 (March 2005), 22-33.

their work can still be found. For example, Dingley, who specifically asserts his desire to engage in historical enquiry, makes the peculiar assertion that the Pan-cult was most prolific in ‘poetry and *more importantly* in prose fiction’[my italics].¹²⁰ Quite why he considers prose more important is unclear and goes unexplained, but the result is that he neglects the medium most infiltrated by the Pan-motif. Indeed, different mediums often express different aspects and uses of Pan. Dingley misses the religious impulse behind a great deal of the use of Pan and this can be attributed to his lack of consideration of poetry, in which religious elements often tend to be most acutely evident, as well as his intention to produce a piece of secular history.

Hutton and Freeman have both considered the use of Pan by Victorians and Edwardians with attention to religion, spirituality, and paganism. The below examination attempts to follow in this vein, but it also seeks to provide additional examples, particularly with emphasis on minor writers often little discussed, and to add to and widen the discussions. The place of Pan in literature has been far from examined to the point of clarity and saturation. Freeman has concentrated on one individual writer rather than groups of writers and has criticised other scholars for attempting to homogenise disparate images.¹²¹ While it is not the nature of the current section to limit discussion to one individual, it does attempt to highlight the diversity of images and the complexity of issues involved. Furthermore, in specifically examining Pan from the point of view of a history of paganism, the below takes into account not just the appearance of Pan in literature, but his specific characteristics and use by those who can be considered, in the wider framework of this thesis, the most pagan.

Let us turn then to examine the Pan-motif. Because of the ancient myth that Pan died with the inauguration of the Christian era, writers had to first decide whether he was actually dead or not. By the end of the nineteenth century, the overwhelming decision was that he lived. This often drew on the ancient concept of Pan as ‘All’¹²² as well as his association with rural scenes and adopted the rationale that Pan could not be dead

¹²⁰ Dingley, ‘Meaning Everything’, 48.

¹²¹ Freeman, “‘Nothing of the Wild Wood’?”, 22-33; Nick Freeman, ‘The Terror of Unseen Things: Saki and the fin-de-siecle Pagan Revival’ in *The Pomegranate*, 17 (Summer 2001), 20-33.

¹²² The ancients made this word-play on ‘pan’ quite early on, but it was not until the Roman period that Pan became a universal god, the All.

because the natural world still lives. For example, Walter de la Mare denied the death of Pan because he did not know who else it could be who sang through the valleys.¹²³ Patrick R. Chalmers argued that though we may find him stiffer since the centuries have passed, he is not dead in the least because he is the god of 'the garden and the fold', 'the bird and the beast', 'the sap and the soil'.¹²⁴ Similarly Le Gallienne wrote that Pan lives as long as nature and so is therefore eternal despite waxes and wanes.¹²⁵ Pan might not be dead but he was separated from the modern experience. Swinburne in 'The Palace of Pan' wrote of a secluded shrine deep in the forest which had been long forgotten and by which Pan sleeps.¹²⁶ 'Michael Field' (the pseudonym of the literary partnership of Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper) also employed the image of Pan asleep in the hidden and remote countryside.¹²⁷ W.E. Henley hoped that the old gods were not dead, instead liking to think of them 'living at least in Lempriere undeleted...retreated in some still land of lilacs and the rose'.¹²⁸ Such exile could be perceived as sorrowful for the gods because they do not understand it. For example, Elinor Sweetman wrote of Pan present at the time of the crusades, disorientated and confused by Christianity:

Down in the reeds, where marsh ways divide,
Two mournful eyes stare out the stems between;
It is the faun that aye at Easter-tide
Pipes up the sap in boughs and rushes green.
Poor waif of lost and luscious years gone by,
To whom sweet earth hath place of joyance been,
What should he know of doleful Calvary?
Or Jewish spear, or of the Riven Side
That fills he chalice of the Crucified?¹²⁹

However, for Lady Margaret Sackville, fauns are able to live alongside the modern world blissfully unaware that the world has changed. One of her later poems, 'The Vicar's Wife and the Faun' playfully deals with an accidental encounter which leaves the faun

¹²³ 'They Told Me' (also titled 'Tears') in Walter de la Mare, *Poems* (London: John Murray, 1906).

¹²⁴ 'Pan Pipes' in Chalmers, *Green Days*.

¹²⁵ 'The Spirit of the Open' in Richard Le Gallienne, *Vanishing Roads and Other Essays* (London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1915), 136-42.

¹²⁶ 'The Palace of Pan' in Charles Algernon Swinburne, *Astrophel and Other Poems* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1894).

¹²⁷ 'Pan Asleep' in 'Michael Field', *Wild Honey From Various Thyme* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908).

¹²⁸ 'The Gods Are Dead' in W.E. Henley, *Poems* (London: D. Nutt, 1898).

¹²⁹ 'Pastoral of Lancelot' in Elinor Sweetman, *Pastorals* (London: J.M. Dent, 1899).

interested to know what a 'vicar' is because, he thinks, 'there *may* be vicars hiding in the wood'.¹³⁰

Images of an exiled, hiding, or sleeping Pan encouraged the link between Pan and nature because Pan's place of refuge was invariably the remote countryside. In this way, the countryside was increasingly equated with something different to modern England and Pan became the juxtaposition of images of the modern world. Pan was naturalised in England as representative of the English countryside, more likely, even, to be found in the English wood than in the Grecian olive grove. The countryside was depicted as a world separate from modern England of the cities and so could represent all things Arcadian, primitive and undiscovered. Indeed, just as country folk could be perceived as being close to paganism, so the countryside herself could appear inherently pagan. The patriotism that Kipling sought to instil in his stories of Puck, in which Dan and Una are delighted by tales of England's past, resulted in such images and further embedded Pan in the English countryside.¹³¹ Such stories were probably what Algernon Blackwood had in mind in his own short story wherein a boy acquires the nickname 'Pan', a name described as 'stolen from my tuck-up stories'.¹³² However, it is important to point out that these perceptions of the countryside were very much those of the city-dweller looking out from his urban window and so such images were intrinsically bound up with conceptions of the 'other'.

Images of the countryside also occupied many minds with great potency because of an awareness that the countryside was vanishing, due to the ever encroaching sprawl of industry. Grahame's 'The Rural Pan' clearly expresses this sentiment. Grahame explains that whereas other gods, such as Mercury and Apollo, have been seduced by the modern world of 'lunches and lawns' this does not tempt Pan, who instead remains 'remote in other haunts', piping in quiet backwaters for only a few to hear. He describes Pan and his relationship to the modern world thus:

¹³⁰ 'The Vicar's Wife and the Faun' (1925) in Lady Margaret Sackville, *The Collected Poems of Lady Margaret Sackville* (London: Martin Secker, 1939).

¹³¹ Rudyard Kipling, *Puck of Pook's Hill* (London: MacMillan, 1906).

¹³² 'The Attic' in Algernon Blackwood, *Pan's Garden* (London: MacMillan, 1912).

Both iron road and level highway are shunned by the rural Pan, who chooses rather to foot it along the sheep track on the limitless downs or the thwart-leading footpath through copse and spinney, not without pleasant fellowship with feather and fir. Nor does it follow from all this that the god is unsocial. Albeit shy of the company of his more showy brother-deities, he loveth the more unpretentious humankind, especially them that are adscripti glebae, addicted to the kindly soil and to the working thereof: perfect in no way, only simple, cheery sinners. For he is only half a god after all, and the red earth in him is strong...To-day the iron horse has searched the country through – east and west, north and south – bringing with it commercialism, whose god is jerry, and who studs the hills with stucco and garrottes the streams with the girder. Bringing, too, into every nook and corner fashion and chatter, the tailor-made gown and the eyeglass. Happily a great part is still spared – how great these others fortunately do not know – in which the rural Pan and his following may hide their heads for yet a little longer, until the growing tyranny has invaded the last common, spinney, and sheep-down, and driven the kindly god, the well-wisher to man – whither? ¹³³

Grahame is happy in his thought of Pan still living in the countryside but he is greatly concerned that the countryside is disappearing and his concern is obviously both for Pan and the tradition of rural life in England. He dislikes the type of people ‘civilisation’ cultivates every bit as much as he loves the simple rural ‘sinners’ (as he mockingly uses the word).

Henry Nevinson adopts a similar tone of love for the simple people in *The Plea of Pan* (1901). Nevinson’s Pan is a ‘rude god of an innocent but distinctly primitive Arcadia’. He is a very old god and describes Apollo and company as ‘but upstarts of yesterday’. Pan calls modern people not to shun his world, as the Athenians did ‘in their most pellucid air’. The Athenians are described as being like refined people of the modern day and Pan explains that at these types of people he ‘take[s] delight in thrusting out my hoofs and displaying my goatish side’. Pan describes himself as the consort of the Earth Mother whom he serves faithfully as her ‘dog-of-all-work’. Pan is the god of the animals and the ‘under-man’ and he describes his love for the simple men by the fact that he finds the fisherman more beautiful than the Parthenon of Athens, the hunter fairer than naked Artemis, and that for the miner he cries more than for the dead Zeus.¹³⁴ The minor poet, Arthur Davidson Ficke, similarly depicts Pan as no Olympian but instead an early god for the dispossessed.¹³⁵ Thus Pan was used not just as an aspect of pastoral nostalgia. Pan could be depicted untied to Parthenon allegiances and un-revering of authority,

¹³³ ‘The Rural Pan’ in Grahame, *Pagan Papers*, 37-8.

¹³⁴ Henry W. Nevinson, *The Plea of Pan* (London: Duckworth and Co, 1901).

¹³⁵ ‘In Thessaly’ in Arthur Davidson Ficke, *From the Isles* (Norwich: Samurai Press, 1907).

instead helpful and loving towards those men close to nature and with the least. Here, with such expressions of social conscience and love for the lower classes, we are close to images found in our first variety of paganism. Indeed, Nevinson was a friend of Carpenter's and expressed his esteem for him in Gilbert Beith's collection of essays *In Appreciation*.¹³⁶

Grahame took up the image of Pan for a second time in *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), with increased spirituality. Pan reveals himself to Toad and Mole as a loving paternal god and they experience the revelation with awe and only a little fear. Pan is described as a 'Friend and Helper' who looks after the lost baby otter and then safely returns him to the animals. Grahame also imbues Pan with a gift never before attributed to him – the gift of forgetfulness.¹³⁷ Grahame describes this as a kindly gift that enables the animals to be 'happy and light-hearted as before' without the memory of the encounter overshadowing mirth and pleasure.¹³⁸ This gift is perhaps significant for two reasons. Firstly, that Grahame does not want Pan to encroach upon and spoil the lives of the little animals suggests that for him such over-bearing religion was one of the key problems with Puritanism. Secondly, that importance is attached to unconsciousness suggests that Grahame believes that a lack of consciousness of Pan is the best way to worship him. This suggestion fits with ideas of the uncivilised and uneducated being the most beloved of Pan.

The image of Pan as a lover of those in need was also used by T. Sturge Moore in *Pan's Prophecy* (1904). The poem is a literary interpretation of the ancient myth of Pan's encounter with Psyche after her bitter abandonment by Eros. Here Pan explains to Psyche that he frequently offers hope and consolation to those suffering at the hands of love.

Sob, sob no more; confide thy sorrow, maiden,
To one whose wise and aged heart is laden
With echoes of all griefs that country folk
Have felt and shuddered under
...Ofttimes nymph or faun

¹³⁶ Henry W. Nevinson, 'Work and Freedom' in *In Appreciation*, 159-67.

¹³⁷ This trait was subsequently copied by other writers. See, for example, Ethel Clifford's 'The Dryad' in *The English Review of Modern Poetry*, Vol. 1 (1908-9), 611-17.

¹³⁸ Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows* (London: Methuen, 1908), Chapter 7 'The Piper at the Gates of Dawn'.

To tell of their heart-breaking disappointments
Seeketh me in the lone mid-forest lawn;
Or with torn flesh, sprained joints, requiring ointments,
Fainting, will reach my hill-crest cave at dawn.

Pan is depicted as a lover of the earth, both wise and benign. Moreover, he is able to empathise with situations because of difficulties he has experienced personally due to his bastard divinity; after all, Pan is only half god:

When I was young, the laughter of the gods
Woke me to loneliness, they at their feast
Mocked mine infant shape, so unlike theirs,
So unlike man's, and yet not like the beast
That thinks not on itself: as when wind stirs,
And this tree shakes, that nods,
So foreign seemed their laughter in mine ear.
Madness might seek pity from such folk;
I sought not, ne'er have sought, but borne my yoke
And known myself, known them, without fear.¹³⁹

Other poets also latched onto the vulnerability of Pan and his ability to be a good god precisely because of the agonies he has suffered. A recurring device in this image is the use of the ancient myth that Pan lost his love, Syrinx. R.C. Trevelyan writes of the sadness of Pan in his dramatic poem *The Bride of Dionysus* (1912); however, Bliss Carman's extended poem 'The Pipes of Pan' is perhaps the best example in this context. Herein Carman writes of Pan's humanity,

All there is of human woe
Pan has fathomed long ago;
All of sorrow, all of ill,
Kindly Pan remembers still:
Disappointment, grief, disdain,
Stifled impulse and bleak pain, -
Pan has learned them; Pan has known
Hurts and passions of his own.

Carman explains that as a pill to ease the pain of losing Syrinx, Pan cut a reed to make a pipe. The image of Pan with a reed pipe is taken from mythology, but through literary license Carman makes this the moment that Pan becomes a god. Pan is described as a god who knows man and is near to men because he is similar to them; indeed it is his very

¹³⁹ T. Sturge Moore, *Pan's Prophecy* (London: Duckworth and Co, 1904).

humanity that made him a god.¹⁴⁰ All of this emphasis on love, suffering, and human experience, is, of course, similar to Christian images of Jesus.

Where images depart from the Christian is with emphasis on Pan's offer of joy and freedom; this tended to go beyond the realms of what any respectable Christian could dare to attribute to Christ. In another poem in the same volume, Carman writes in the voice of Pan's music (which is also Syrinx) and describes how in ancient times 'I was youth and love and rapture, I was madness in their veins'.¹⁴¹ The South African poet Maud Stoward linked Pan to these sentiments in her poem published in the English *Poetry Review* wherein Pan's music causes her pulses to race such as she had never before known.¹⁴² Henley found Pan still reigning and triumphant in the gaiety of May Day celebrations.¹⁴³ In Wilde's 'In the Forest' the narrator sees a faun and is drawn to him 'moonstruck with music and madness'.¹⁴⁴ When Eleanor Farjeon called to Pan it was so that she should 'see again a dance of Dryads/ And airy shapes of Oreads circling free/ To shy sweet pipings of fantastic fauns/ And lustier-breathing satyrs'.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, Forest Reid's world of *The Garden God* was the rebirth of an ancient time 'when you played on the flute of Pan' and were able 'to run in the moonlight, to run over meadows, to bathe in the river, to be free'.¹⁴⁶ For Reid, as described through the friendship of the two young heroes, Bocklehurst and Graham, this was also a world of free homosexual relations.¹⁴⁷

Due to an emphasis on joy, Pan, as Le Gallienne surmised, 'it is to be feared, is a god who is not always to be found in full evening dress and in perfect taste'.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, Grahame's biographer, Peter Green, has assessed that (despite Grahame's use) Pan was, in general, a literary symbol 'without any highest common factor except a vague full-

¹⁴⁰ 'The Pipes of Pan' in Bliss Carman, *The Pipes of Pan* (London: John Murray, 1903), 16-44.

¹⁴¹ 'Syrinx' in Carman, *Pipes of Pan*, 54-66.

¹⁴² Maud Stoward, 'The Passing of Pan' in *Poetry Review*, Vol. 4 (1914), 16-21.

¹⁴³ W.E. Henley, 'Allegro Maestoso' in *Poems*.

¹⁴⁴ Oscar Wilde 'In the Forest' repr. in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, Vol. 1: Poems and Prose* eds. Bobby Fong and Karl Beckson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 169-70

¹⁴⁵ Eleanor Farjeon, 'Pan-Worship' in *Pan-Worship and Other Poems* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1908). 9-12, 11.

¹⁴⁶ Forrest Reid, *The Garden God: A Tale of Two Boys* (London: David Nutt, 1905), 49-50.

¹⁴⁷ Reid had hoped to dedicate the book to Henry James, but James refused due to its homosexual nature. Indeed, from its first depiction in a modern novel, Howard Sturgis's *Tim* (1891), and throughout the present period of study, issues of homosexuality continued to repel consensus values and to write of homosexuality was to be radical.

¹⁴⁸ Le Gallienne, *Attitudes and Avowals*, 19.

blooded animalism'.¹⁴⁹ Thus to employ Pan in literature was often to represent and imply something subversive. Max Beerbohm described Pan's creatures, the fauns, with 'their hoofs and their slanting eyes and their way of coming out of the woods to wean quiet English villages from respectability'.¹⁵⁰ In Forster's 'The Story of a Panic' (1904) a young English boy, Eustace, realises the spirit of Pan in the woods whilst on holiday in Italy. Immediately he is divorced from his fellow English company who in the absence of seeing Pan, view Eustace's new behaviour as uncivilised and unmannered. Forster also implies homosexual relations in the relationship between Eustace and the Italian waiter, Gennario, who we learn shares the same spirit of Pan.¹⁵¹

Beardsley used the Pan motif in many of his pictures, drawing on and exalting ideas of Pan and subversion. He linked Pan specifically to the decadents. In the frontispiece to *Plays* by John Davidson (1894) he used a faun to depict Henry Harland, literary editor of *The Yellow Book*. In *The Savoy* (April 1896) he published a picture of himself tethered to a bust of Pan.¹⁵² Elsewhere he felt the Pan image strong enough that only a single aspect of Pan's body was needed to depict the sedition he intended. He drew Wilde and many others with Pan-like horns to illustrate their opposition to society. In 'The Toilet of Helen' printed in *The Savoy* (No. 1 1896) the table leg with ornamentation is, under closer inspection, the cloven hoof and shaggy thigh of Pan.¹⁵³ Such use increasingly turned Pan into a mere symbol of ill-repute. Of course, Beardsley was only operating within established Christian images of equating Pan with the Devil. However, by his decadent stance of evil as desirable and his audacious use of Pan lurking in the background in all kinds of situations, Beardsley made such images of Pan all the more potent. In addition, Chris Snodgrass has argued that Beardsley often took images of Pan

¹⁴⁹ Green, *Kenneth Grahame*, 140.

¹⁵⁰ Max Beerbohm, *Seven Men* (London: William Heinemann, 1919), 53.

¹⁵¹ E.M. Forster, 'The Story of a Panic' in *Independent Review* (March, 1904).

¹⁵² He was himself caricatured as Pan in *Punch* (1895).

¹⁵³ This picture was later included in *Venus and Tannhauser*, a book which itself carried a frontispiece depicting Pan either side of Venus and included within its pages many other pictures that made use of the Pan-motif.

to further extremes away from Victorian ideals, by depicting him as a 'satanic hermaphrodite'.¹⁵⁴

The degree to which Pan was presented as subversive varied according to individual taste; however, even in his tamest guise, Pan could never be the epitome of respectability or conservatism because he represented something rural and primitive and brought with him a way of life that the Victorians and Edwardians did not lead. In their veneration of Pan and his fresher, younger pagan world, writers felt the need for something akin to good old-fashioned praise and supplication to exhort Pan to rule and transform the modern world. Poets flooded Pan with calls. To give but two examples: Wilde cried, 'oh goat footed god of Arcady...this modern world has need of thee!';¹⁵⁵ and Farjeon called, 'Pan! Pan! O Pan! bring back thy reign again/ Upon the earth!'.¹⁵⁶ Drawing on Shelleyan notions of the poet as guider of nations, standing outside of society seeing through all fakery, many poets believed that they themselves were the special friends of Pan. Skovgaard-Pedersen wrote that the pagan gods are forgotten except by a small clan of 'singers' who sit apart and call for the reign of Pan: 'We are the singers, who weave our song/ Dreaming alone in the city's throng/ Striving to waken the soul of man/ And lead him back to thy kingdom, Pan!'.¹⁵⁷

Where the teleology of calling was not deemed sufficient, other ways to find and restore Pan were posited. R.C.K. Ensor hoped that Pan would take the initiative. He describes Pan waking up from a long sleep only to find the modern world had gone wrong. Pan declares that the work of men is his responsibility, just as the creation of man is Nature's, and laments:

I, who am Pan the All-receiving – I
Cannot seal up my eyes or stop my ears;
And yet to watch my creatures waste and die
Is agony; whereto while the smoke bears
Its burden to me, no end appears:

¹⁵⁴ Chris Snodgrass, *Aubrey Beardsley: Dandy of the Grotesque* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 58-9.

¹⁵⁵ Oscar Wilde, 'Pan: A Double Villanelle' repr. in *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, 140-3.

¹⁵⁶ Farjeon, 'Pan-Worship', 12.

¹⁵⁷ 'The Singers' in Skovgaard-Pedersen, *Pagan*. Also note, that for Grahame their role was more unintentional: 'we had never expected to become great in art or song; it was the life itself that we loved; that was our end - not, as with them, the means to an end.' ('A Bohemian in Exile' in *Pagan Papers*).

I must go pray the silver-tinkling Rain,
To deaden with its drops that drip of tears,
Remit the pangs of witnessing that pain,
Let for a little while my world be mine again.

This is followed by Pan summoning all the forces of Nature to purify the world, effectively wiping the slate clean, to enable men to have a second chance.¹⁵⁸ For John Cowper Powys, Pan takes no such active role. On meeting a faun who sings forlornly of a lost and happier time, the narrator undergoes a conversion and decides henceforth to dedicate his life to seeking Pan. This he realises is a long task through which he must 'Wash away with sun and rain/ The restless soul, the human mind/ This irremediable pain/ These intellectual searchings blind!'¹⁵⁹ Carman similarly wrote that a modern man must undergo a process of 'unlearning', but his poem is driven by an invitation from Pan to strive towards his world:

Follow till your feet have found
The desired forgotten ground,
And ye know, past all unlearning,
By the raptured quench of yearning,
What the breath is to the reed
Whence the magic notes are freed.

Carman explains that once Pan is found, one will never want to go back in doors.¹⁶⁰ Thus poetry and prose detailed dreams of what Pan's world might be as well as praise in the hope that through appeasement he would return.

Given the preoccupation with Pan in literature, it is next necessary to consider what precisely these writers were getting out of the use of paganism. Firstly the literary basis of this variety of paganism must be stressed. Through the decadent representation, paganism may have been perceived as a threatening social alternative, but this type of paganism was not written in the form of social manifesto. Sharp made his intentions clear in the foreword to *The Pagan Review*, stating

¹⁵⁸ 'Pan in the Pennine' in R.C.K. Ensor, *Modern Poems* (Adelphi: R. Brimley Johnson, 1903).

¹⁵⁹ 'The Faun' in John Cowper Powys, *Poems* (London: William Rider and Son, 1899).

¹⁶⁰ Carman, 'Pipes of Pan'.

this magazine is to be a purely literary, not a philosophical, partisan, or propagandist periodical. We are concerned here with the new presentment of things rather than with the phenomena of change and growth themselves. Our vocation, in a word, is to give artistic expression to the artistic “inwardness” of the new paganism.¹⁶¹

As a further example, the setting up of homosexual enclaves did not prove particularly popular with those of homosexual persuasion. In 1893 George Ives founded a secret homosexual society called ‘The Order of Chaeronea’. As far as is known membership was small and the order did not attract key literary figures. Ives’s diary entry for October 1892 records advice from Wilde that he set up a pagan monastery on some rocky Mediterranean island but there is no evidence to suggest that Wilde attempted to set up any homosexual society himself nor that he joined Ives’s Order.¹⁶²

Although this variety of paganism is not a social calling, it still represented anti-authoritarianism and dissatisfaction with society. Furthermore, since radical social action was not necessitated, paganism could be experienced by a wider audience. Rather than retreating into small social enclaves, literary paganism was more visible and, to judge by the number of people writing about Pan and paganism, apparently quite attractive. What this meant for paganism was that it could simultaneously become both more militant and more populist. Swinburne wrote of a liberating paganism; however the scholar, Murray G.H. Pittock, has convincingly argued that under close examination Swinburne expresses a sexuality too internalised to be borne out in reality.¹⁶³ Indeed, part of the attraction of decadence was the thrill of being subversive and an attempt at rational social implementation would detract from the excitement. Even for the less offensive, the imagination could go beyond the action the writer would have been prepared to take in real life. Grahame wrote that he was a ‘faithful pagan’ whose ‘blood danced to imagined pipings of Pan from happy fields far distant’¹⁶⁴ but this did not mean he was trying to actively convert all of society to the way of Pan, or that he had to change much in his own lifestyle to be a pagan. Grahame was in fact a rather timid man, who was not particularly unconventional. He joined the Bank of England in 1879 and worked there,

¹⁶¹ Sharp, *Pagan Review*, 3.

¹⁶² Stokes, *Oscar Wilde*, 68.

¹⁶³ Murray G. H. Pittock, ‘Swinburne and the Nineties’ in *Whole Music of Passion*, 120-35, 121.

¹⁶⁴ ‘A Bohemian in Exile’ in Grahame, *Pagan Papers*.

enjoying quite a distinguished career, until retirement in 1908.¹⁶⁵ Chalmers described Grahame's workaday routine as a pagan such that 'in the evening he left Threadneedle Street and came home, striding among the flower-beds of Kensington Gardens as good an Arcadian as Daphnis or as "dear divine" Comatas himself'.¹⁶⁶ Interestingly, Grahame's wife, Elspeth, was the more unconventional of the two. She refused to wear an engagement ring and was determined to orchestrate her own 'Wemmicky' wedding.¹⁶⁷ This left Grahame worrying what the Bishop would say and wishing she'd tell him 'ow much of a wemmick marridge its got ter be'.¹⁶⁸ On the wedding day itself Elspeth decided to abandon the new wedding dress in preference for an old gown she had freshly drenched in the morning dew.¹⁶⁹

As we have seen, the literature of paganism often contained assertions that paganism was not the expression of irreligion. Taking this further, many wrote of paganism in terms of their own faith. For example, Beerbohm claimed to be a convert to the belief that Vulcan, Mercury, Pan and Dionysus still lived on though humbly and wrote of how he looked forward to the day when they could rule again as in the past.¹⁷⁰ Eleanor Farjeon called to Pan, 'The pagan in my blood, the instinct in me/ That yearns back, back to nature-worship, cries/ Aloud to thee!'.¹⁷¹ Other writers considered paganism in religious terms but as one element alongside other religions. In 1889 one half of 'Michael Field', Katherine Bradley, described her religion as 'Christian, pagan, pantheist, and other things the name of which I do not know'.¹⁷² Ernest Dowson wrote that he prayed to Aphrodite and Persephone for deliverance and peace, and he also of his love of the peace of the Carthusians and of extreme unction.¹⁷³ Thus writers did not feel they had

¹⁶⁵ For details of his banking careers see his biographies by Green and Prince.

¹⁶⁶ Chalmers, *Kenneth Grahame*, 121.

¹⁶⁷ Wemmick is the lawyer's clerk from Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1861) who, in Chapter 55, suddenly gets married on the spur of the moment.

¹⁶⁸ Letter to Elspeth Thomas 29 June 1899, Papers of Kenneth Grahame, MS.Eng.misc.e.480 leaf 61.

¹⁶⁹ Prince, *Kenneth Grahame*, 172-3.

¹⁷⁰ Max Beerbohm, 'Hellas via Bradfield' in *Recreations and Reflections: Being Middles From The Saturday Review* (London: J.M. Dent, 1902), 146.

¹⁷¹ Farjeon, 'Pan-Worship', 10.

¹⁷² In Bush, *Mythology*, 409.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 460.

to be out-and-out pagans in religion in order to write about paganism with fondness and admiration.

Moreover, Pater argued that many people called to the pagan gods disingenuously; these were people, he explained, who 'would never really have been made glad by any Venus fresh-risen from the sea, and who praise her only because they fancy her now staid and tame'.¹⁷⁴ We must be careful to remember that when dealing with literature we are not dealing with a straightforward historical source. Literature is imbued with romanticism, heightened emotions, and artistic devices such that it must not be assumed the sentiments of paganism expressed in literature necessarily indicate that paganism was functioning as a sincere and complete religion. In the pleasantly jovial 'A Poet at the Court of Pan', Sackville makes it clear that she perceived this predicament. A group of nymphs capture a poet whom they find lamenting the loss of Pan and wishing he lived in Arcady. The nymphs take the poet to Pan and, terrified by the whole ordeal, at his first chance the poet escapes. The nymphs are upset because they thought that in the poet they had found someone after their own heart, but Pan explains, 'Know that poets often rue/ Greatly when their dreams come true' and so the nymphs conclude, 'Poets mean not what they say/ Give me a shepherd any day!'.¹⁷⁵

In the 1890s the P-word appeared to have selling potential, but we must not misunderstand what was meant by the employment of the word. In 1891 Sharp expressed that he was reluctant to be called 'pagan' himself since, as he explained to a friend, all he wanted to do was 'to fashion anew something of the lovely vision I have seen'.¹⁷⁶ He had originally intended to name his review the 'White Review' and the name change cannot be seen as a change in direction. From the outset Sharp wrote that he intended the review to be 'the expression of a keen pagan delight in nature'.¹⁷⁷ Similarly, the colour white was very much aligned in his imagination with the ancients and his sonnets and poems of the 1890s abound with the use of the colour. For example, in 'On a Nightingale in April' he wrote of how he last heard white music under the olives where Theocritus once sang and

¹⁷⁴ Walter Pater, 'Postscript' in *Appreciations* (1870 and 1889) repr. in *Walter Pater: Three Major Texts*, ed. William E. Buckler (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 538-50.

¹⁷⁵ 'A Poet at the Court of Pan' (1912) in Sackville, *Collected Poems*, 306-13.

¹⁷⁶ Letter to Mrs. Janvier dated 1st May 1891 in *Sharp: A Memoir*, 185.

¹⁷⁷ *Sharp: A Memoir*, 199.

in 'Written by the Sea' he wrote of the mind dreaming and being healed by beautiful visions of white joy, white peace and white balm.¹⁷⁸ Sharp overcame his fear of being labelled 'pagan', most likely due to marketing strategy, but his original title emphasises his use of paganism as literary images rather than a desire to express a re-born religion.¹⁷⁹ Indeed, in literature an awareness of paganism as a religion was not always necessary. The work of Grahame was admired throughout the western world and he received letters of praise from many of the world's leading statesmen. President Theodore Roosevelt wrote to Grahame before reading *The Wind in the Willows*, 'of course it won't have any problems, any sex, any second meaning – that is why I shall like it'.¹⁸⁰ Having read the book, the Prime Minister of Australia, Alfred Deakin, wrote that its climax in the vision of Pan is 'a piece of imaginative insight to which it would be hard to find a parallel anywhere'.¹⁸¹ Grahame's use of Pan could therefore be seen as a literary expression and not as a religious preference for an ancient Greek god and, so long as this was not accompanied by anything too immoral, his books could receive great success in the mainstream.

Significant in the context of religion is the very preference for Pan. In his autobiography, Reid describes his state of mind,

The Greeks were like a floating golden web that caught and held and coloured my imagination, though they had not, I dare say really awakened what might positively be called faith. My deities were the Arcadian gods, the lesser gods, Pan and Hermes. The darker, more mystic element interwoven with the worship of Dionysus (the truly religious element, doubtless, with its blood-sacrifices and ecstasy, mingled lust and madness), this was repellent to me because of the cruelty bound up with it. The deities I invoked, or evoked, were friendly, and more than half human.¹⁸²

For Reid, Pan was turned to because he was not intrinsically bound up with a frightening primitive religion but because he was friendly. Indeed, the image of Dionysus/ Bacchus

¹⁷⁸ William Sharp, *Poems* (Selected and Arr. By Elizabeth A. Sharp; London: William Heineman, 1912), 286; 256.

¹⁷⁹ When the review failed Sharp and his publisher wrote about it as a second collapse of the 'Kingdom of Paganism'. Elizabeth Sharp recorded that mourners gathered at their house and they buried the Review in the corner of the garden with a framed inscription placed to mark its spot. (*Memoir*, 207) Again, the sincerity of such acts must be treated with caution and perhaps be seen more for their symbolism than their religion.

¹⁸⁰ Letter dated 22 October 1908, Papers of Kenneth Grahame, MS.Eng.misc.d.530.

¹⁸¹ Letter dated 28 January 1909, Papers of Kenneth Grahame, MS.Eng.misc.d.527.

¹⁸² Forrest Reid, *Apostate* (London: Constable and Co, 1926), 210.

and Pan are very closely linked. Both were traditionally associated with the countryside, the vine and joy and could be depicted with horns. In writing of madness and revelry poets did sometimes turn to Dionysus. In 'Reveille' 'Michael Field' called on Dionysus to return¹⁸³ and in 'The Wooing of Dionysus' Sackville wrote of Dionysus charming a group of maidens and placing the mad and wild scent of grape in their nostrils.¹⁸⁴ James Elroy Flecker's 'The Bridge of Fire' describes young pagan gods peeping among the trees and dancing to the sound of Bacchus's drum, and in 'The Ballad of Hampstead Heath' it is a young Bacchus and his following who incite people in the modern world to rejoice and dance.¹⁸⁵ However, for most writers it was Dionysus's crew, including Pan, the satyrs and the dryads, who were more readily turned to than Dionysus himself. The reasons for this are perhaps two-fold. Firstly, there was more literary mileage to be got out of Pan. The myth which juxtaposed Pan and Christianity played an important part because it allowed Pan to stand for paganism in its entirety, as did his name. Similarly, the lack of myths surrounding Pan allowed his image to be far more malleable than the already established images of Dionysus. Secondly, as Reid describes, writers of paganism did not necessarily want to turn to a full blooded paganism of Dionysian divine madness. They preferred a paganism which, while offering a degree of divine madness, was also tailored to their present day concerns and could offer a simple idyllic world in contrast to the state of modern England.

In Reid's *The Kingdom of Twilight* (1904), the nine year old boy, Prosper, asks his father, Willie, 'what is a pagan?' Willie answers:

He is a boy for whom the world is full of beautiful gods...There is the great god Pan who lives in the meadows and in the woods and among the mountains; and who pipes in the shade while the little fauns dance and sing. And it is he who watches the ships as they come slowly across the 'wine dark' sea. And there is Poseidon who lives far down under the waves, and whose white horses and chariot you can see on stormy days; and Demeter who walks in the yellow corn-fields and helps the reapers; and her daughter Persephone who stands among the sleepy poppies; and Hermes the god of the fields and the ways. And there are nymphs – nymphs of all kinds – some that live in streams and ponds; and some that live in grottos; and some again, called Dryads, who are the nymphs of trees. Each Dryad lives in a particular tree, and when that tree dies or is cut down, then the poor nymph must die too. And there are the elves and the fairies, the creatures that live in your tales, and dance under the moon. The

¹⁸³ 'Reveille' in 'Field', *Wild Honey*.

¹⁸⁴ 'The Wooing of Dionysus' (1911) in Sackville, *Collected Poems*, 136-70.

¹⁸⁵ James Elroy Flecker, *Collected Poems* (London: Martin Secker, 1916), 59; 39-41.

wind is a god, and the sky is the greatest god of all; so that you are never alone. For all of them watch over you, love you and help you, both in the daytime and in the night. And you must love them too, Prosper, and everything that is theirs and speaks of them, every tree and flower, and every little thing, and other boys like yourself – you must never do them harm, nor think hardly of them.¹⁸⁶

A pagan is described as one living in a homely, friendly world made up of a composite of Greek gods and all manner of other little sprites. This, it seems, was the pagan world in which Reid himself believed. As a child, Reid encountered story books of the ancient Greek voyages, at which Reid later wrote he could have shouted ‘My world! My world’ because ‘it was the only heaven I wanted, or ever was to want’.¹⁸⁷ Reid fashioned his own form of paganism. As a young man he stuck on his wall a print of Socrates and a print of Hermes to act as his guardians, human and divine. He emphasised that in all of this he had no learning and that his paganism was one of his imagination: ‘it was a paganism softened, orientalised, I dare say, to bring it into accord with what I desired; nevertheless, what appealed to me *was* to be found in the literature of Greece, and not elsewhere’.¹⁸⁸

Reid may have shied away from the Dionysian religion but within his paganism there are expressions of near-faith. He himself wrote that sometimes when outside, he experienced a longing, an excitement and an uneasiness which rendered his state of mind at that moment ‘indistinguishable from that of the worshipper’.¹⁸⁹ Grahame similarly wrote of the religious state of mind experienced when out-of-doors. Ever since a child at Oxford, Grahame loved exploring the countryside.¹⁹⁰ In ‘Romance of the Road’ he wrote of the intoxication of the outdoors:

There is a certain supernal, a deific state of mind which may indeed be experienced in a minor degree, by anyone, in the siesta part of a Turkish bath. But this particular golden glow of the faculties is only felt at its fullness after severe and prolonged exertion in the open air.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁶ Reid, *Kingdom of Twilight*, 266-7.

¹⁸⁷ Reid, *Apostate*, 27-8.

¹⁸⁸ Reid, *Apostate*, 205-6. Note that Reid described ‘orientalised’ as being ‘a kind of romantic luxuriousness and sleepiness’.

¹⁸⁹ Reid, *Apostate*, 212-13.

¹⁹⁰ Kenneth Grahame, ‘Oxford Through a Boy’s Eyes’ in *Country Life* (3 December, 1932).

¹⁹¹ ‘Romance of the Road’ in *Pagan Papers*.

In 'The Spirit of the Open' Le Gallienne also perceived the love of the outdoors as 'something not so very far removed from religion, romantic religion'. He wrote that he, and many other men and women in the present day, are often compelled to write outside rather than indoors and that this links them to all those who have ever heard the call of the great god Pan. He argued that 'Pan being one of the oldest of the gods, might well, in an age eager for novelty, expect to be the latest fashion; but the revival of his worship is something far more than vogue'. Instead, in Pan, 'modern man is finding his religion as it was found by those first worshippers of the beautiful mystery of the visible universe'.¹⁹²

In 'Vanishing Roads' Le Gallienne articulated this further:

Whatever reality, much or little, the personifications of Greek Nature-worship had for the ancient world, there is no doubt that for a certain modern temperament, more frequently met with every day, those personifications are becoming increasingly significant, and one might almost say veritably alive. Forgotten poets may, in the first instance, have been responsible for the particular forms they took, their names and stories, yet even so they but clothed with legend presences of wood and water, of earth and sea and sky, which man dimly felt to have a real existence; and these presences, forgotten or banished for a while in prosaic periods, or under Puritanic repression, are once more being felt as spiritual realities by a world coming more and more to evoke its divinities by individual meditation on, and responsiveness to, the mysterious so-called natural influences by which it feels itself surrounded. Thus the first religion of the world seems likely to be its last...The dryads and the fauns have not been frightened away for good. All over the world they are trooping back to the woods, and whoso has eyes may catch sight, any summer day, of "the breast of the nymph in the brake". Imagery, of course; but imagery that is coming to have a profounder meaning, and a still greater expressive value than it ever had for Greece and Rome.

Le Gallienne expressed a belief in the revival of paganism and for him this is a near-religion. He accepted its roots in literature but argued 'it is not man that has "poetised" the world, it is the world that has made a poet out of man, by an infinite process of evolution'.¹⁹³ Thus he believed modern paganism was not a mere literary device but a religion with poesy at its heart.

In the wake of a growing love for the outdoors, and combined with the new trend for motor car excursions, E.V. Lucas edited a highly popular collection of literary works entitled *The Open Road: A Little Book For Wayfarers* (1899). The book included extracts from Grahame, Shelley, Whitman, Carman and Edward Fitzgerald among others and stated its aim as

¹⁹² 'The Spirit of the Open' in Le Gallienne, *Vanishing Roads*, 137.

¹⁹³ Le Gallienne, *Vanishing Roads*, 1-16, 3-5, 7.

a garland of good or enkindling poetry and prose fitted to urge folk into the open air, and, once there, to keep them glad they came – to slip easily from the pocket beneath a tree or among the heather, and provide lazy reading for the time of rest, with perhaps a phrase or two for the feet to step to and the mind to brood on when the rest is over.¹⁹⁴

Having revelled in the love of nature, the book ends with a section called ‘The Return’ in which the merits of the city are exalted. At once this makes the book far less radical and gives a clear indication of the manner in which it was intended: the exaltation of nature was only meant to be experienced as a short holiday.

The close link of ideas about nature and the outdoors with ideas of paganism perhaps allows us to see paganism in a similar vein. Although paganism could entail some of the traits of religion, and certainly the extent to which it was experienced as a religion was more pronounced in some ‘worshippers’, literary paganism did not implicitly demand full time engagement. To revel in paganism instead had the tenet of escape at its core. This escape was not once and finite but rather a rejuvenating holiday after which one went back to that which he had escaped. Thus paganism was primarily experienced as a Saturday night of intellectual dreaming and a bank holiday of restful delight. Through his examination of Grahame’s life and work, Peter Green has argued that paganism functioned as an escape-route from an intolerable reality and suggested that such use of paganism can be seen alongside that of drink, tobacco, sleep, travel and nature as existing as a drug, whether soporific or stimulant.¹⁹⁵ This idea highlights both the extent to which paganism represented an ideal world of joy and freedom and the extent to which many were disenchanted by their situation in the modern world but felt impotent to affect any actual change. As a soporific drug, paganism facilitated problems to be forgotten and not addressed. For example, the poet Wilfrid Thorley wrote that he did not want to heed the scars of the modern world and asked instead, ‘Give me an aged isle where I may dream, of the days long fled – the days of Arcady’.¹⁹⁶ Grahame’s short story ‘The White Poppy’ where the narrator takes a magic juice of oblivion to forget the

¹⁹⁴ ‘Explanation, April 1899’ in E.V. Lucas, ed. *The Open Road: A Little Book for Wayfarers* (London: Grant Richard, 1899).

¹⁹⁵ Green, *Kenneth Grahame*, 116-24.

¹⁹⁶ ‘Sonnet’ in Wilfrid C. Thorley, *Poems* (Heacham-On-Sea: Clarion Press, 1904), 13.

wretched condition of man can be seen, Green has argued, to represent what Grahame himself is after.¹⁹⁷ Perhaps we can also attach this significance to the special gift of forgetfulness that Grahame imbued in Pan.

Seen as a stimulant or soporific drug, paganism can be linked to Chesterton's idea of 'the cult of the pessimistic pleasure seeker'. Chesterton argued that the pessimistic pleasure seeker is dissatisfied with society but feels it is worthless to try to fundamentally change his social situation. Instead he self-consciously snatches at any rare delight in order to escape from the horrors of reality for a short time.¹⁹⁸ Anna Bunston's 'Sorrow Endowed' depicts pagan escapist delights as the repudiation of a dismal asceticism, whereby 'satyrs and shapes grotesque, nymphs, dryads and fauns/ Alluring cry "Why lonely linger?"/ Wine, love and laughter await thee on the lawn/ And beckon thee with roseate finger'.¹⁹⁹ John Sherwood has highlighted the validity of this idea in the case of Flecker arguing that 'such happiness as Flecker had known consisted of snatched pleasures, enjoyed against the background of suppressed fears and tensions'.²⁰⁰ Flecker's poem 'Oak and Olive' clearly illustrates his use of paganism as a world of escapist delight. He begins by stating, 'Though I was born a Londoner/ And bred in Gloucestershire/ I walked in Hellas years ago/ With friends in white attire'; and goes on the ask, 'Have I not chased the fluting Pan/ Through Cranham's sober trees?/ Have not sat on Painswick Hill/ With a nymph upon my knees/ And she as rosy as the dawn/ And naked as the breeze?'.²⁰¹ The implied answer to his questions is yes; the point is that it is escapist fantasy. This is not to question the 'reality' of Pan nor the sincerity of the dream, but rather to highlight that paganism functioned in the realm of the individual. Viewed as absurd yet alluring escapist dreams, we can realise the continuity of this type of literature, through the decadent 1890s and into Edwardian fiction.

¹⁹⁷ 'The White Poppy' in *Pagan Papers*; Green, *Kenneth Grahame*, 116-24.

¹⁹⁸ Chesterton, *Heretics*, 107.

¹⁹⁹ Anna Bunston, 'Sorrow Endowed' in *Leaves From a Woman's Manuscript* (Reigate: Priory Press, 1904), 37.

²⁰⁰ John Sherwood, *No Golden Journey: A Biography of James Elroy Flecker* (London: Heinemann, 1973), 111.

²⁰¹ 'Oak and Olive' in Flecker, *Collected Poems*, 176-8.

While literature may be a problematic source for historians in terms of literary license and questionable sincerity, if we bear in mind that one of the key functions of literature *per se* is escapism, we can further unlock this variety of paganism. Many writers explicitly called to their readers to escape through their books. John Cowper Powys called ‘O braid thy tresses Helen-wise/ Put naught but roses in thine hair/ And tread with me where Attic skies/ Make sweet the air’.²⁰² ‘Paganus’ insisted that the experience of escape whilst reading his poetry had to be absolute: ‘Only for song-time and summer these numbers/ Where trees are many and mortals are few’.²⁰³ Bliss Carman prefaced his *The Pipes of Pan* with a conversation between a landlord and a stranger. The landlord invites the stranger to try all manner of different wines and points particularly to ‘a rare Moonshine, as they call it, picked up in an out-of-the-way port, that will make you forget your sorrow like a strain of music’. This is the exact same quality that Carman later imbues in Pan and so paganism and the poetry within the book are consciously likened to the escapism of an open wine cellar.²⁰⁴

Grahame admitted his love of dreaming in a lecture delivered towards the end of his life to the Keats-Shelley Association. He argued that dreaming contained merit since ‘your hill-top may disappoint you, and your sea-coast be too stuffy or too expensive, but the mountain air of dreamland is always recuperating, and there Apollo and all the Muses, or at least Pan and his attendant Fauna await you’. He claimed that dreams are an easy and accessible reaction from life, however he also challenged ‘but can we, dare we, attempt to draw a strict dividing line between the wayward dream and the highly purposeful ideal, to pronounce exactly where one leaves off and the other begins?’²⁰⁵ This clearly shows he believed (at least in later life) that when properly disentangled his dreams of paganism came close to a more rigorous philosophy. A further realisation of this dividing line was largely rejected; this variety of paganism was primarily the product of disillusion rather than the optimistic search for a more fulfilling philosophy. It remained the preserve of literary escapism, with paganism functioning as a ‘quick fix’ – a

²⁰² ‘Oedi Profanum’ in Powys, *Poems*.

²⁰³ ‘Dedication’ in ‘Paganus’, *Poems of Paganism*.

²⁰⁴ ‘Preface’ to Carman, *Pipes of Pan*, 9-12.

²⁰⁵ The lecture entitled ‘Ideals’ was later published in *The Fortnightly Review* (December, 1922).

drug to release the individual from reality in the short term rather than an endeavour to change modern reality wholesale.

Although the dream world was friendly and sanitised for those like Grahame and Reid, for others it could contain and promote elements altogether more sinister. Pan was rarely completely tame, but at other times still he could represent something highly frightening. Such images are not necessarily confined to a different set of writers. For example, Sturge Moore first described Pan as the consort of the lonely hearted but he also produced a woodcut of Pan for the second edition of the *Pageant* which was perceived at the time as the depiction of 'a Pan of mystery and terror, resting from the leadership of some whirling orgy, with shaggy inhuman beast-limbs and heavy head and malignant eyes, lowering over unimaginable wickedness'.²⁰⁶ The ability of Pan to morph into such differing guises was tied up in the concept of Pan as *all* of nature, to the effect that he could represent both its friendly and its frightening aspects. Swinburne describes this in 'The Nympholept' where he calls to Pan, 'But in all things evil and fearful that fear may scan/ As in all things good, as in all things fair that fall/ We know thee present and latent, the lord of man'.²⁰⁷

Saki (H.H. Munro) presents us with a terrifying Pan in his story 'Music on the Hill'. The story follows the fate of a city woman visiting the countryside who, despite warnings from her husband, chooses not to believe in Pan and steals an offering to him from a field. The husband warns that Pan will seek retribution and tells her to stay away from horned beasts. Sure enough the next day the woman hears shrilled pipe music and is killed by a stag, but not without a moment to allow her eyes to be 'filled with the horror of something she saw other than her oncoming death. And in her ears rang the echo of a boy's laughter, golden and unequivocal'.²⁰⁸ A further poem by Swinburne gives us a similar depiction of Pan. In a dialogue between the gods Pan and Thalassius, Thalassius

²⁰⁶ Review by F.M. Atkinson, 'Literary Notices' in *Dana: An Irish Magazine for Independent Thought*, No. 4 (August, 1904).

²⁰⁷ 'A Nympholept' in Swinburne, *Astrophel*.

²⁰⁸ 'Music on the Hill' in Saki, *The Chronicles of Clovis* (New York: Viking Press, 1911). For a discussion of Saki in relation to paganism see Nick Freeman, 'The Terror of Unseen Things: Saki and the fin-de-siecle Pagan Revival' in *The Pomegranate*, 17 (Summer 2001), 20-33.

speaks of 'The panic that strikes down strangers/ Transgressing thy ways unaware' such that 'Man Knows well, if he hears beside him/ The snarl of thy wrath at noon' What evil may soon betide him/ Or late, if thou smite not soon, Pan'.²⁰⁹ Thus Pan is presented as a god of retribution; a god who knows not of forgiveness but only of judgement. These sentiments draw on the equation of Pan with 'panic' (*panikon*), an aspect of Pan derived from the ancient myth of Pan intervening in the battle at Marathon. Added to the examples above, Forster's 'Story of a Panic' also highlights a sudden unforeseeable fear felt in the presence of Pan.

Gordon Bottomley's 'The Dairymaids to Pan' depicts Pan as frightening. Pan is a bucolic god who can be found at night fondling the sheep and easing the teats of the cows. The dairymaids are timidly afraid of him because they recognise his power and volatile nature. They try to appeal to his better side:

Goatfoot do not fright us
In the woodland meadows,
Goatfoot, Goatfoot,
When the kine have led us
Far from home at milking-time
Down dark groves of scented lime
To the weedy water where
Deep they wade for cooler air.
Think of all your fruited feast;
Be the good god Goatfoot
To herd our beasts.

The poem also hints at the sexual side of Pan through the image of dairymaids as women cowering together in their beds.²¹⁰ Indeed, Pan's sexuality was often emphasised in poetry to portray him as terrifying and sinister. John Gould Fletcher describes the flocks of Pan drowsing in blissful slumber, but how when Pan awakes the flocks cry, 'A red face with horns and a rag/ Of beard, leers down at us/ 'Tis Pan, the horrible/ Goat-legged, amorous!/ Flee over rock and dell!'²¹¹ Henley described Pan's spell as 'rough' and 'lewd'²¹² and Beardsley's depictions of Pan have a strong emphasis on the sexual

²⁰⁹ 'Pan and Thalassius' in Swinburne, *Poems and Ballads*.

²¹⁰ 'The Dairymaids to Pan' (1899) in Gordon Bottomley, *Poems of Thirty Years* (London: Constable and Co, 1925), 12-3.

²¹¹ 'The Flocks of Pan' in Fletcher, *Book of Nature*.

²¹² Henley, 'Allegro Maestoso'.

alongside the sinister. William Somerset Maugham described a vision of Pan seen by the ill-fated Margaret in *The Magician* (1908) with Pan's face as 'horrible with lust and cruelty, and yet it was divine...and the lecherous eyes caressed her with a hideous tenderness'.²¹³ Similarly, Sackville depicts Syrinx as pitiful and defenceless and at the mercy of a lustful Pan. Pan is described as a cruel conqueror and Syrinx is left to plead:

If some kind god would fail
The inexorable purpose of Pan's lust,
Having pity on my young blood's recoil;
My frugal, kindly, passionless days which must
Perish, perish like wild wood berries,
By sharp-hoofed goat-feet trampled all to dust.

Sackville's Pan is the domination of sex and the loss of innocence and beauty.²¹⁴

Therefore, paganism in literature was not always an idyllic dream world and paganism could be used as a way of representing fears. The emphasis on pagan gods can show a turning away from rationalist beliefs, which had been so prominent in early Victorian England, and expose a belief in the inability of man to know everything alongside a continued concern with the unknown supernatural. Edgar Jepson's novel *No. 19* (1910) begins with its protagonist, John Plowden, reading Nevinson's *The Plea of Pan* and believing Pan to be delightful and tame. However, Plowden soon discovers that his next-door neighbour, Woodfell, is practising ritual magic in an attempt to revive ancient mysteries and that Pan, the central god in the rites, has a more terrible side. Plowden partially experiences some of the rites from the window of his house (number 20), looking into the garden of 'No. 19', and is exposed to things he had, hitherto, not realised existed. As the rites progress, Plowden senses the 'acrid smell of a goat' which increases in potency, rising to the point of absolute fright such that he cannot ever watch the rites to their completion. The book ends with two of its practitioners killed, apparently by Pan, and Woodfell reduced to a madman, only able to utter the words, 'Pan is not dead'. Thus,

²¹³ William Somerset Maugham, *The Magician* (London: Heinemann, 1908; repr., London: Vintage, 2000), 104.

²¹⁴ 'Syrinx' (1913) in Sackville, *Collected Poems*. Also note the opposite reinterpretation of the myth in 'A Song of Syrinx' by Chalmers in *Green Days*. Here Syrinx is told off for playing with Pan's feelings.

Woodfell at last uncovers the key to 'see' Pan but because of Pan's great and perhaps, malefic, power, this is also to be his downfall.²¹⁵

Machen's *The Great God Pan* (1894) emphasises the existence of horrors unknown to create confusion, indeterminacy and destabilisation. The novel affirms that Pan is analogous to the Devil in the description that he is 'an exquisite symbol beneath which men long ago veiled their knowledge of the most awful, most secret forces which lie at the heart of all things'.²¹⁶ The story tells of a female creature half human and half pagan god whose birth is the result of a doctor's ill-conceived experiment. The doctor is depicted as a 'typical' man of science who tampers with that which he does not fully understand, his overreached experiments meeting with perilous consequences. As this creature grows up she amuses herself by introducing her male friends to her father, the god Pan, who inspires the men to commit suicide. Machen in fact stated that the book was based on one of his own experiences as a child alone in the Welsh valley of the Usk and rather than wanting to incite terror, he had intended to describe awe, solemnity and mystery.²¹⁷ Nevertheless, the positioning of paganism within the irrational and supernatural reveals that the ability of literature to provide escapist comfort was not absolute. Literature was based on individual imaginative wanderings at a time when confidence in man was rising, but still riddled with insecurities. As literature, paganism could be used as an attempt to transliterate fears but it could not remove them.

Religion is of course the traditional weapon used for combating fears but as we have seen, as literature, paganism did not make an appearance as a fully formed religion. This was not due to a lack of religiosity of the time. For all their defiance and disregard, the decadents and their Edwardian successors had not dispensed with religion. Decadent morality worked within the Christian framework of the recognition of sin. Thomas Hardy described decadence 'as though a garland of red roses, had fallen about the hood of some smug nun'²¹⁸ and Le Gallienne highlighted that 'Sin is no sin when virtue is forgot' It is

²¹⁵ Edgar Jepson, *No. 19* (London: Mills and Boon Ltd, 1910).

²¹⁶ Arthur Machen, *The Great God Pan* (London: John Lane, 1894), 92.

²¹⁷ Machen, *Autobiography*, 120-1.

²¹⁸ Cited in Burdett, *Beardsley Period*, 46.

good to keep sin in sight'.²¹⁹ Barry argued that decadents acted along short-term ideas and were unconcerned with the fate of their souls.²²⁰ However, in contrast, Holbrook Jackson perceived their disillusion to imply that their souls were still sensitive and he argued that every physical excess must be seen hand in hand with spiritual desire.²²¹ Indeed, ideas about sin were sometimes linked to ideas about the way to salvation. Swinburne, for example, wrote that erotic desire was the means to divine immediacy and so argued that men obtained sanctification precisely through violation.²²² Barry conceded that if modern men were satisfied to be atheists, the 'melodious dithyrambs' of Swinburne would not have attracted and provoked them.²²³ In criticising the paganism of the Romantic poets, Francis Thompson did not seek to discredit their religious sentiments, but rather to sever their link to pagan religion and reposition them as aspects of the Christian faith.²²⁴

Although the decadents hated all things Puritan, many converted to Roman Catholicism later on in life. Wilde, Beardsley, Lord Alfred Douglas, Lionel Johnson, Ernest Dowson and John Gray are some of the most notable examples. The story of Wilde is perhaps a typical example: an inclination towards High Church practices, a positive urge to embrace Roman Catholicism but without any of the discipline, a deathbed but relatively sincere conversion, and a burial with rosary worn round the dead man's neck.²²⁵ Pater's Marius, it is hinted, similarly converted to Christianity on his deathbed.²²⁶ In 1933, Chesterton remarked that he was glad fiction was full of a return to paganism because paganism led to an eventual christening. He compared paganism to diffused light glowing behind a cloud so that when its true centre of worship is invisible it still projects a halo of wonder and the supernatural and keeps religious aspiration alive.²²⁷

²¹⁹ Richard Le Gallienne 'The Decadent To His Soul' in *English Poems* (1892) repr. in *Aesthetes and Decadents*, 123-5.

²²⁰ W.F. Barry 'Democratic Ideals' in *The Nineteenth Century* (1894) repr. in *Nineteenth Century Opinion*, ed. M. Goodwin (Harmonsworth: Penguin, 1951).

²²¹ Jackson, *The Eighteen Nineties*, 132.

²²² Snodgrass 'Swinburne's Circle of Desire', 67-9.

²²³ Barry, *Heralds of Revolt*, 333.

²²⁴ Thompson, 'Paganism Old and New', *passim*.

²²⁵ See Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*.

²²⁶ Pater, *Marius*, Chapter 28.

²²⁷ G.K. Chesterton, 'On Modern "Paganism"' in *All I Survey* (London: Methuen, 1933).

While Chesterton may have believed that paganism was ultimately good for the religiosity of the nation, tethered to literature, paganism was prevented from serving its own ends. When writers of literature tried to assert paganism in religious tones they could not detail a thorough exposition of pagan religion and could at best only express religious sentiment. Thus in the critics' view the new-born gods of paganism could not undergo a true revival because as the product of intoxicating pleasure, they were not fully formed.²²⁸

Had paganism been used more as a religious tool, a dialogue between ancient and modern worldviews may have been able to strike a compromise to better cater for modern needs. This would have been useful in the apparent inability of paganism to explain death and the hereafter. Peter Green has argued that an underlying fear of death was a characteristic of late Victorian paganism, since 'their sensuous pantheism had no place for an eschatology'.²²⁹ Classical Greek philosophy actually explains death quite well but the modern perception of it gained through literature, often provided little peace of mind. Swinburne's lines express his perception of the pagan sentiment: 'we thank with brief thanksgiving/ whatever gods may be/ that no life lives forever/ that dead bodies rise up never/ that even the weariest river/ winds somewhere safe to sea'.²³⁰ As literature, these lines are both elegant and beautiful but this wistful approach to the inevitability and finality of death in practice often provided little comfort. Rather than appearing complete with eschatology, to the modern mind, paganism seemed to say, as Marius along his journey at point realised, 'Post mortem nescio!' ('after death I do not know').²³¹ The familiar tag, 'Et in Arcadia ego,' meaning that even in Arcadia death could not be avoided, made a lasting impression on Grahame and Beardsley both of whom were disturbed by death.²³² Therefore, despair could go beyond that able to be quelled by a drug. Escapist paganism may have allowed the individual to dream of a more enchanting world but it could not curb fears about unknown forces or offer the long term comfort of an ancient authority.

²²⁸ Barry, *Heralds of Revolt*, 331-2.

²²⁹ Green, *Kenneth Grahame*, 119-20.

²³⁰ 'The Garden of Proserpine' in Swinburne, *Poems and Ballads*.

²³¹ Pater, *Marius*, Chapter 24.

²³² Green, *Kenneth Grahame*, 120; Letter dated January 11, 1898 in *Letters From Aubrey Beardsley to Leonard Smithers*, ed. R.A. Walker (London: Club, 1937).

Nevertheless, the process of internalisation that was implicit in escapist paganism led to a greater emphasis on the individual and reveals an increased realisation of the place and importance of individuality. The decadents looked to Greece for its emphasis on man and the godliness of man. Swinburne wrote that ancient times were those when 'In the fair days when God/ By man as godlike trod/ And each alike was Greek, alike was free'.²³³ He argued that all deities reside in the human breast and in order to restore his 'divine humanity', man must realise his god-like potentialities. In the climax to 'Hymn of Man' Swinburne cries, 'Glory to man in the highest, for man is the master of things'.²³⁴ Paterian ideas similarly asserted the innate godliness of man's instincts by drawing on the ideas of the Epicureans and Cyreniacs and stressing the importance of one's individual sensations and experiences. The decadents' use of pagan ideas asserted man's just pride in himself and not humility. Such ideas were decidedly individualistic; paganism was to be used by and for the individual, where the individual can gain solace for himself but does not concern himself with achieving solace for others. Moore's decadent protagonist was attracted to a pagan world of heroes and strong virtues in contrast to the lack of heroes in the modern world. He believed that the modern way of mass mediocrity and lack of individuality would meet with the dismal result that 'we shall founder in putrefying mud, creatures of the coze'. He argued that since there is 'little left to raise our hearts and minds to...the snob is now the ark that floats triumphant over the democratic wave'.²³⁵ Thus decadence was in many ways an attack on socialism and rising uniformity and an attempt to create a new elite.

Sharp dreamed of a new community coming to fruition not through social change, but comprising of a new type of people. *The Pagan Review* spoke of a 'younger generation', though not necessarily young in years, for which the new paganism is a potent leaven.²³⁶ For the second edition of the Review an article was promised entitled 'The New Paganism' written by H.P. Siwaarmill. Siwaarmill was in fact another of

²³³ 'To Victor Hugo' in Swinburne, *Poems and Ballads*.

²³⁴ Swinburne 'Hymn of Man' in *Songs Before Sunrise*.

²³⁵ Moore, *Confessions*, 119; 144.

²³⁶ 'Foreword' to *Pagan Review*.

Sharp's pseudonyms (it is an anagram of his name) and the article was never written.²³⁷ However, we have a clue to its contents from an earlier novel by Sharp, *The Children of Tomorrow* (1889). Here Siwaarmill features as a Dutch mystic philosopher whom the characters quote with reverence. The key sentiment of his teachings is the appearance of a new and growing set of people, not bound by hereditary or race, in whom 'the new forces of the future are already astir or even dominant'. These people 'live more intensely and suffer more acutely than others,' arriving out of a feeling of exile and the ensuing insularity.²³⁸ Emphasis was on their power as emotional individuals and their display of a highly cultivated humanity.

Beyond such specific ideas, the general personal navigation and the creative use of images of ancient Greece marks an emphasis on man. No intermediaries were needed to establish a relationship with paganism. Through literature, individuals claimed ancient Greece as their own so that Greece could become something imaginatively realised. Flecker highlighted the supremacy of individual negotiation in his poem which repudiated concern for scholarly facts about Greece and asserted that 'poets have the nicer scholarship/ In English glades they watch the Cyprian glow/ And all the Maenad melodies they know.'²³⁹ The literary exploration of the countries of the mind empowered the imagination and the individual. In the 'Inner Ear', Grahame aligned the realm of paganism with one's inner self. He described the clatter of the city as numbing all feelings of oneself and wrote that it was necessary to 'make ourselves as small as possible' and search for silence in order to escape. He argued that this would lead to the shy nymphs and one's 'inner ear'.²⁴⁰ Grahame's escapism may mark a retreat from the modern world into the imagination but it also breathed life into man's inner being. Growing out of this vein, paganism came to function not as a constrained set of beliefs but as a creative impulse which contained within it an adaptability that was supremely modern.

²³⁷ Sharp: *A Memoir*, 201.

²³⁸ William Sharp, *The Children of Tomorrow* (1889) repr. in *Degeneration and Regeneration Texts of the Pre Modern Era*, eds. Ian Fletcher and John Stokes (London: Garland Publishers, 1984).

²³⁹ 'Invitation' in Flecker, *Collected Poems*, 96-7.

²⁴⁰ Kenneth Grahame 'The Inner Ear' in *The Yellow Book*, Vol. 5 (April 1895), 73-6.

Overall, images of paganism in this variety may not have been historically accurate but as literature they did not intend to be. Aspects of paganism were augmented or diminished according to individual taste so that paganism was often presented almost in caricature guises, from a perfect idyll to a land of disrepute. Paganism was in many ways a pessimistic answer to dissatisfaction with modern industrial England and it largely functioned as an escapist intellectual Saturday night. Its literary basis promoted emphasis on the individual and gave rise to a paganism which could be internalised, digested and creatively re-imagined so that the individual could experience it a highly personal way. It could also be attractive to a wider audience because it did not necessitate radical social action. However, as an intellectual fantasy, staunch commitment was not required and so the number of robust pagans was not high. Paganism offered short term drug-like relief from the pains of the modern world but it could not give the comfort of a properly constructed religion or philosophy. This leads us on to our third variety of paganism. Here paganism was used not as a literary tool inducing an escape from the world, but as a source of ancient wisdom which could illuminate all of the world's forces and truths.

CHAPTER 5: MAGICAL PAGANISM

There was a resurgence of interest in magic and the occult in Europe during the latter half of the nineteenth century. England played a prominent role in this by giving birth in 1888 to the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, which Gerald Yorke has hailed as 'the crowning glory of the occult revival'.¹ The Golden Dawn was a magical order, which drew on a range of magical sources in the formulation of its rituals. One important influential strand was pagan ideas. Pagan wisdom and methods were attractive because of the traditional conception of the ancient Mediterranean world, and specifically ancient Egypt, as the original fount of magical knowledge. Members of the Golden Dawn varied in their beliefs and some were more attracted to pagan ideas than others. Some members who were especially attracted to paganism, became deeply embroiled in pagan thought, using paganism not only in their magical rituals but in their social perceptions too. This chapter will examine the use and nature of magical paganism, and the extent of its appeal. As the largest and most important magical order in our period, attention will focus primarily on the Golden Dawn and those magicians who adorn its history.

The majority of publications about the Golden Dawn have been produced by non-academics aiming at an occult audience. The best among these have been written by Ellic Howe, R.A. Gilbert and Francis X. King.² The Golden Dawn has received less profuse and more gradual interest from academics. Early interest in the Order came by way of scholarly examination of W.B. Yeats, probably the most well known of all Golden Dawn initiates in mainstream circles.³ In more recent years, a few scholars have gone to the Order directly: papers were published by both Daniel van Egmond and Günther Thomann

¹ Gerald Yorke, 'Foreword' in Ellic Howe, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), ix-xix, xi.

² Ellic Howe, *Magicians of the Golden Dawn*; R.A. Gilbert, *The Sorcerer and His Apprentice* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1983); R.A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn Companion: A Guide to the History, Structure and Workings of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1986); R.A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn and the Esoteric Section* (London: Theosophical History Centre, 1987); R. A. Gilbert, *Revelations of the Golden Dawn: The Rise and Fall of a Magical Order* (London: Quantum, 1997); Francis X. King, *Modern Ritual Magic: The Rise of Western Occultism* (Dorset: Prism, 1989), first published as *Ritual Magic in England* (London: Neville Spearman, 1970).

³ Richard Ellmann, *Yeats: The Man and The Masks* (London: MacMillan, 1949); Richard Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats* (London: MacMillan, 1954); George Mills Harper, *Yeats's Golden Dawn* (London: MacMillan, 1974); Grahame Hough, *The Mystery Religion of W.B. Yeats* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1984).

in 1998 and Hutton provided a chapter on the Order in *Triumph of the Moon* (1999).⁴ The major academic contribution to research into the Golden Dawn came in 2004 by Alison Butler in her, as yet, unpublished PhD thesis, 'The Intellectual Origins of Victorian Ritual Magic'.⁵

The present chapter aims to contribute to the excellent work of Butler; however, rather than focusing on Golden Dawn magic and ritual *per se* as was the nature of Butler's thesis, I seek to explore the particular pagan aspects of the Order and the way in which paganism came to govern the minds of some of its magicians. By this emphasis, examination includes links to wider Victorian and Edwardian society and culture: the relationship of the rise of magic to the rise of Egyptology; the way in which magical aims interacted with the social aims of the magicians as aspiring, though ordinary, men and women; and the development of pagan aspects in magic towards pagan religion and mystery religion. Thus the present chapter approaches the Golden Dawn from a hitherto unexplored standpoint.

In order to understand the significance of paganism within the Golden Dawn, we must first establish the precise nature of the Order. The Golden Dawn was founded as a result of a number of fortuitous and unclear events. A full examination of these events has been undertaken elsewhere, as well as being beyond the scope of this chapter, and so below is only a broad and brief overview.⁶ In the romantic version of events, the clergyman Adolphus F. A. Woodward discovered a mysterious cipher manuscript in a London bookshop; perhaps more likely, he found a cipher manuscript among a collection of papers left by the recently deceased occultist Frederick Hockley. The London coroner and master mason, William Wynn Westcott is credited with translating it. He claimed that it detailed several hitherto unknown initiatory rituals and contained the name and address of a certain German adept, Anna Sprengel. Anxious to pursue this lead, Westcott apparently wrote to Sprengel and found out that she was a high-ranking member of a

⁴ Daniel Egmond, 'Western Esoteric Schools in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', in *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times*, eds. Roelof van der Broek and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 311-46; Günther Thomann, *The Revival of Hellenist Religion* (London: 1998); Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, 66-83.

⁵ Alison Butler, 'The Intellectual Origins of Victorian Ritual Magic' (University of Bristol, 2004).

⁶ See works listed in Footnote 2.

German Rosicrucian order. This was said to be directly descended from the 'original' Rosicrucian order, which, as legend has it, was a secret society founded in the fourteenth century by a mysterious figure, Christian Rosenkreuz, who was learned in great knowledge and wisdom. Sprengel authorised the founding of a new branch of her society in England. This was to be temple number three of the order and called the 'Isis-Urania Temple'. The original leaders of this English branch were Westcott, his protégé Samuel Liddell Mathers (who later added 'MacGregor' to his name), and a leading freemason, William Robert Woodman. On 12th February 1888 they signed pledges of fidelity and on 1st March Westcott signed and dated a charter on behalf of Sprengel formally authorising the foundation of this new branch of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

An accurate description of the foundation of the Golden Dawn must not view the Order in isolation. Hutton argues that the modern British revival of ritual magic began with the founding of the *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia* (SRIA) in 1867.⁷ This society resulted from the alleged discovery of a body of ceremonies in a Freemasons' Hall by Kenneth Mackenzie and Robert Wentworth Little. Although the SRIA did not practice ritual magic, crucially, they taught the theory of it. Scholars generally agree that the society was only really pseudo-Rosicrucian and that few of its members had significant knowledge of traditional Rosicrucian teachings.⁸ Rosicrucianism itself rose in the eighteenth century with the publication of three manifestos about a secret brotherhood in existence throughout Europe. While this, it seems, was myth, the publications led to a proliferation of interest in Rosicrucianism.⁹ Rosicrucian philosophy concerned itself with a spiritual and esoteric form of alchemy, which sought to purify the soul and attain divine union. Butler convincingly argues that a desire to get closer to the traditional, more mystical and spiritual, nature of Rosicrucianism was one reason for the establishment of the Golden Dawn.¹⁰ Indeed, the SRIA can more accurately be seen as an off-shoot of Freemasonry, as reflected in the fact that admittance was to master masons only. Freemasonry wielded a highly significant influence on the Golden Dawn, providing much of the structure, rituals and language particularly for the outer order. The three founders

⁷ Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, 72.

⁸ King, *Modern Ritual Magic*, 38; Howe, *Magicians of the Golden Dawn*, 33.

⁹ Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), 207.

¹⁰ Butler, 'Intellectual Origins', 110-31, 126.

of the Golden Dawn were all master masons and members of the *SRIA*: Woodman was its Supreme Magus, and Westcott its secretary and later Woodman's successor.

A further important influential factor on the Golden Dawn was the Theosophical Society, set up by Helena Petrova Blavatsky under the auspices of her 'Mahatmas'. The Theosophical Society aimed to investigate the hidden mysteries in Nature and powers latent in man; coupled with Blavatsky's notorious psychic powers, it was readily linked to magic. The Golden Dawn was influenced by much of the thinking emanating from the Theosophical Society; however, Blavatsky believed in the superiority of Eastern over Western ideas whereas the Golden Dawn was concerned with the Western tradition. Thus the Golden Dawn appealed to members of the *SRIA* and those Theosophical Society members dissatisfied with its eastern focus. The Hermetic Society, an off-shoot of the Theosophical Society set up by Kingsford and Maitland, had attempted to place the focus on Western tradition. It expounded what it called, 'an esoteric Christianity', and it placed importance on the Western mysteries and the cabbala. This was similar in emphasis to the Golden Dawn. Mathers dedicated his book, *The Kabbalah Unveiled*, to Kingsford and Maitland, and Mathers's wife, Moina, stated that the Golden Dawn was particularly influenced by Kingsford and the Hermetic Society.¹¹ In 1888 Kingsford died and the Golden Dawn appeared to be taking its place as the leading light in the hermetic revival. In recognising the place of the Golden Dawn in the context of a larger occult revival, we can understand the ways in which it was answering and responding to currents already circulating in Britain.

The professed aim of the Golden Dawn was set out in Westcott's 'Historical Lecture': 'to lead the true and patient students who can Will-Dare-Learn and Be Silent to the Summum Bonum, True Wisdom and Perfect Happiness'.¹² Thus, as its namesake similarly symbolised, the Order represented an attempt to achieve the regeneration of the old corrupt world and the inauguration of a new spiritually enlightening age, in which general harmony in society would be restored and man finally be made happy. The Golden Dawn believed that the way to achieve its aims was through the study of various

¹¹ Moina Mathers 'Preface to the New Edition' in S.L. MacGregor Mathers, *The Kabbalah Unveiled* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co, 1926), xii-xiii.

¹² William Wynn Westcott 'Historical Lecture' in R.A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn: Twilight of the Magicians* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1983), 99-104, 104.

traditional texts. This method derived from ancient times, as Moina Mathers was aware, explaining, 'the object of the establishment of this school was similar to that of the foundation in ancient times of centres for the celebration of mysteries'.¹³ Of primary importance was the Jewish cabbala, the mystical tradition that had fascinated the Hermetic philosophers of the Renaissance. Particular emphasis was placed on the Sephiroth, the ten emanations of God, which formed the Tree of Life. The Order was organised around these ten emanations, the adept rising through the different grades and understanding their meaning to achieve full understanding of the cabbalistic mysteries. However, woven into this essentially Jewish system was an emphasis on the ancient mysteries, in particular those of the ancient Egyptians and Greeks.

Although importance was placed on the study of these systems, it is necessary to point out that the way to achieve the 'Summum Bonum' was not as linear as it first might seem. Instead, as Yeats clearly expressed,

we [members of the Golden Dawn] all differed from ordinary students of philosophy and religion through our belief that truth can not be discovered but may be revealed, and that if a man do not lose faith, and if he go through certain preparations, revelation will find him at the fitting moment.¹⁴

It was not a case of learning to directly achieve results but rather that through learning, ritual and proper meditation, revelation may be dispensed. This characteristic of the Golden Dawn can be clearly seen if we compare it to the Esoteric Section, an elite group of the Theosophical Society set up largely in response to the appeal and attraction of the Golden Dawn which seemed to be drawing its members away. Emphasis was similar in terms of inquiry into mystical inheritance and the cabbala, although predictably the Esoteric Section laid more emphasis on the Eastern tradition. However, as Gilbert has pointed out, the Esoteric Section appealed to those who longed for the glamour of secrecy and were willing to follow the revealed wisdom of the Mahatmas; whereas the Golden Dawn appealed to the occultist who wanted to be his own master and explore the spiritual world in his own manner.¹⁵ In understanding the Golden Dawn therefore, it is important

¹³ Moina Mathers 'Preface' to *Kabbalah Unveiled*, viii.

¹⁴ W.B. Yeats, *A Vision* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1925), x.

¹⁵ Gilbert, *Golden Dawn and Esoteric Section*, 15.

to recognise that its teleology was one of exploration to effect individual revelation rather than the following of masters.

Given this, it is not surprising that by 1892 some members were dissatisfied with the limitations of the Order, which despite teaching traditional symbolism and working impressive rituals, did not teach practical magic. Practical magic would enable greater individual exploration and so would be a more likely means to gain revelation. It was Mathers who provided a magical system. In 1892 he claimed that he had been contacted by secret chiefs. These were largely analogous to Blavatsky's Mahatmas but they played a much less active role. They gave Mathers authority to set up a Second, Inner Order of the Golden Dawn and a Third Order. The Third Order was beyond attainment for mere mortals, and was the preserve of supernal deities, super-humans who had crossed the Abyss. Of the ten grades through which the adept hoped to rise, the first four (plus the introductory Neophyte grade) marked the outer order, the next three the second order, and the final three the third order. The Second Order was named the *Rosae Rubrae et Aureae Crucis* (RR et AC) and derived its founding myth and much of its symbolism from Rosicrucian tradition. The order drew its membership from the most advanced adepts and was highly selective, a privilege rather than a right. It was in this inner order that members were instructed in the ways of practical magic.

The nineteenth century now had its first magical order. In 1892 there were 150 members and by 1897 there were 323, with 50 of which in the Second Order.¹⁶ Such growth had required other temples to set up throughout the country; thus was formed the Osiris Temple in Weston-Super-Mare (winter 1888), the Horus Temple in Bradford (winter 1888), the Amen-Ra Temple in Edinburgh (1893), and the Ahathoor Temple in Paris (1894). Membership was recruited from a wide circle, and as the twentieth century occultist and occult writer, Israel Regardie, was keen to stress, the Order cannot be assumed to be populated by crackpots. He described that the Order's membership 'was well represented by dignified professions as well as by the arts and sciences, to make but little mention of the trades and business occupations...it included physicians, psychologists, clergymen, artists and philosophers'.¹⁷

¹⁶ Figures cited in Gilbert, *Golden Dawn Companion*, 3.

¹⁷ Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*, 4 vols. (1937-40; repr., Wisconsin: Hazel Hill Corp, 1971), I. 17.

Before moving on to examine paganism within the Golden Dawn, two further features of the Order must be pointed out. Firstly, it is significant that the Golden Dawn, in stark contrast to other secret societies such as the Freemasons, admitted women into its ranks. Moreover, women were well represented in the Order. Of particular note are the wife of Mathers, Mina (later changed to Moina) who was, incidentally, also the sister of Henri Bergson; and the actress and occultist Florence Farr. W.A. Ayton probably expressed the view of many in the Order when he wrote that Moina Mathers was 'perhaps the most advanced of all' women in the Order.¹⁸ She also played a key role in the exploration of rites and mysteries in Paris, as shall be examined below. Farr was highly prominent in the Golden Dawn and Mathers placed her in charge of the Order in England after Westcott's departure from the Golden Dawn.¹⁹ Mary K. Greer comments that this role was not given to Farr because Mathers thought she would be easy to control, but precisely because she was an excellent occultist and a powerful figure.²⁰ Other women such as Maud Gonne, Annie Horniman, and Elaine Simpson all rose to high rank and were important figures within the order. The Golden Dawn's 'Historical Lecture' explained that its reasons for the admission of women were that the cipher referred to 'him' and 'her' and so revealed that 'in older times as in the present day, women rode to high rank and attainments in the secret knowledge of the Order'.²¹ It is likely that the well respected Kingsford, who was also an ardent promoter of the status of women, strongly influenced the Order's view. In addition, in one of Ayton's letters to co-member, F.L. Gardner, it was expressed that women were important in magic since magic 'is a thing to be worked together, husband and wife especially'.²² However, Ayton's comment is unlikely to refer to the working of sexual magic within the Golden Dawn, since it was expressly against such working and there is no evidence that sexual magic was practised

¹⁸ Letter dated 3 April, 1894 in Howe, *Magicians of the Golden Dawn*, 149.

¹⁹ Westcott was forced to leave the Order in 1897 after charges brought against him by the state that he was abusing his position as a coroner and engaging in necromancy. See 'Introduction' in R.A. Gilbert, ed. *The Magical Mason: The Forgotten Hermetic Writings of William Wynn Westcott, Physician and Magus* (Wellingborough: Antiquarian Press, 1983).

²⁰ Mary K. Greer, *Women of the Golden Dawn* (Vermont: Park St. Press, 1995), 191.

²¹ Westcott, 'Historical Lecture', 103.

²² Letter dated 3 April, 1894 in Howe, *Magicians of the Golden Dawn*, 149.

within the Order.²³ Furthermore, it is noteworthy to highlight that, conversely, the Mathers's marriage was a celibate one.²⁴

This leads us on to the second feature of the Golden Dawn: that it was characterised by a concern for morality and respectability. Moina Mathers asserted in the Preface to *Kabbalah Unveiled* that 'purity of aspiration and of life are the first and essential qualities demanded of the student'.²⁵ The Order was run along strict hierarchical lines and members were carefully screened, with membership to the Second Order being particularly selective. In an official Golden Dawn document Westcott wrote that the two essential conditions for entry into the Second Order are a 'Clean Life' and an 'Indomitable Will'.²⁶ Indeed, Aleister Crowley was denied admittance to the Second Order because of doubts about the purity of his magical motives and suspicion that he was engaging in sexual magic.²⁷ It is notable that in his autobiography the former Golden Dawner, A.E. Waite, otherwise critical of the Golden Dawn, wrote that 'on the score of morality...it is just to say that no breath of scandal ever arose in the Golden Dawn during all that period'.²⁸ The leaders of the Golden Dawn continually warned adepts to be wary of the perils of magic and to approach it with respect and caution. For example, Mathers warned those approaching initiation into the Second Order,

Know thou that this is not to be done lightly for thine amusement or experiment, seeing that the forces of Nature were not created to be thy plaything or toy. Unless thou doest thy practical magical works with solemnity, ceremony and reverence, thou shalt be like an infant playing with fire and thou shalt bring destruction upon thyself.²⁹

Similarly, the majority of those attracted to the Order did not come to it with anything other than serious intent. Arthur Machen's testimony is typical: 'I must say that I did not seek the Order merely in the quest of odd entertainment...I had experienced strange

²³ Although some scholars have argued that there still remains some doubt since they consider it unlikely that the Golden Dawn, which believed in the importance of every facet of man, should totally ignore the sexual aspect. See Greer, *Women of the Golden Dawn*, 352. In addition, there are examples of sexual magic being worked after the life-time of the original Golden Dawn; for example, Yeats and his wife. See Susan Johnston Graf, *Yeats. Twentieth Century Magus* (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser Inc, 2000), 152-82.

²⁴ Letter by Moina Mathers dated 31 December 1895, in Howe, *Magicians of the Golden Dawn*, 117-19.

²⁵ Moina Mathers, 'Preface' to *Kabbalah Unveiled*, ix.

²⁶ William Wynn Westcott, 'The Condition needed for Entry into the Second Order', repr. in Gilbert, *Twilight of the Magicians*, Appendix D, 126-9.

²⁷ Howe, *Magicians of the Golden Dawn*, 233.

²⁸ A.E. Waite, *Shadows of Life and Thought* (London: Selwyn and Blount, 1938), 126.

²⁹ Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, I. 89.

things...and I supposed that the Order...might give me some light and guidance and leading on these matters'.³⁰

Between 1893 and 1896, with the help of contributions by other order members most notably Farr and Percy Bullock, Westcott edited and published nine volumes known collectively as the *Collectanea Hermetica*. These dealt with the main pursuits of the Order, such as alchemy, the cabbala, Gnosticism, mystery religions, and Egyptian traditions. Importantly, it was presented as a work of academic and intellectual integrity, as Westcott makes clear in the Preface to the first volume:

Such a work as the Arcanum, written by one who knows, is not sent to print, to teach the public, to show a cheap and easy way to wealth and luxury, or to assist coiners of spurious moneys, but is intended as a treasure house in which those who have devoted life and love to the quest may find stored up the data and experiences of such as have trodden the Path and have borne tribulation and persecution, counting all loss to be gain in their progress to success and to the possession of that Stone of the Wise, which when obtained can indeed transmute the things of the material world, but does also equally work upon all higher planes, and enables an Adept to soar unheeding into worlds of joy, wisdom, and exultation, which are unseen, unknown, and inconceivable to ordinary mortals, who have chosen the alternative of physical contentment and material happiness.³¹

In realising the Order's concern for respectability, we can understand the nature of the Golden Dawn more fully. The Order was not frivolous or purposely immoral, but a serious effort into the investigation of ancient mysteries in an attempt to bring to the world 'True Wisdom and Perfect Happiness'. Thus, the nature of paganism in the Golden Dawn has some similarities in nature to the paganism of Edward Carpenter. Both were using paganism as an alternative ideology to achieve an ideal existence for mankind.

However, the Golden Dawn placed no stipulation on its members to radically alter their lifestyles. Moina Mathers argued that isolation tended to make a man egotistical³² and Westcott wrote that vegetarianism could lead to excessive preoccupation with the material nature of man.³³ Moreover, although it was necessary for initiates to lead a good and respectable life, this was not the main thrust of the Order. This variety of paganism,

³⁰ Arthur Machen, *Things Near and Far* (London: Martin Secker, 1923), 143.

³¹ William Wynn Westcott, ed. *Hermetic Arcanum* (*Collectanea Hermetica*, I; London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1893), 8.

³² Moina Mathers, 'Flying Roll No. 21: Know Thyself. Address to the Zelator Adepts Minors of the Order R.R. et A.C. by Vestigia Nulla Retrosum' (26th September 1893), London, Library of the Warburg Institute, Gerald Yorke Collection, NS57, Notebook containing Golden Dawn Flying Rolls.

while being concerned with the path of man, did not operate in the first instance in the social sphere. Nevertheless, magical paganism was not an escapist aspiration, operating in a dream world like 'decadent paganism'. Instead, magical practices were separated from the mundane world yet, for the magicians, nonetheless real. Magical ritual always placed emphasis on consecrating spaces to work within and then banishing the space on completion of the magical work. Crowley used a ring to distinguish between his two lives, only wearing the ring when he was the magician, 'Perdurabo'.³⁴ All members of the Golden Dawn were required to assign themselves mottoes, and they were known by these mottoes while taking part in work in the Order. Although mottoes were used due to an emphasis on secrecy and as an important lesson for the aspirant, they were also a valuable way to distinguish between members' social and magical lives. Therefore in recognising the nature of paganism used in the Order, it is necessary to realise that magical practices operated in their own, separate sphere.

Having examined the beginnings and principles of the Golden Dawn, we must now turn to the specifically pagan features of the Order. One of the difficulties for scholars of the Golden Dawn is the availability of source material, since many are in private collections, whose keepers are reluctant to allow the scrutiny of (uninitiated) academics. Nevertheless, most of the standard rituals of the Golden Dawn are now in the public domain. Some Golden Dawn rituals were first published in 1909 by Crowley, in his journal, *The Equinox*. Further rituals were disclosed to the public from the 1930s onwards by Regardie, the major occult publisher who was also Crowley's one time secretary. In addition, Howe and Gilbert both had access to private collections in the compilation of their published works.

Due to the heavy emphasis on Pan in the previous chapter, it is perhaps necessary to first enquire as to the place of this pagan divinity. Indeed, Pan did feature in the Order. For example, in the Inner Order Rite of the Pentagram and the Five Paths, the fifteenth key of the Tarot is described as analogous to Pan, the representative of the gross

³³ William Wynn Westcott, 'Flying Roll No. 2: A Subject for Contemplation by G.H. Fra. N.O.M.' (1892-5), Yorke Collection, NS57. However, many members of the Golden Dawn were influenced by Kingsford and chose to be vegetarian.

generative powers of nature on the material plane. One of the officers in the ritual describes him thus:

He stands on the Cube of the Universe, holding in his right hand the pastoral staff of ruling authority, and in his left the seven- reeded pipe symbolical of the harmony of the Planetary Spheres. The nine Circles represent the Sephiroth with the exception of kether, exactly those which are included in the symbol on the Tree of Life. The ruddy face is the heat of the Earth – the horns are the Rays – the body contains the Elements and the Cube as its firm basis. Observe that the higher part of the figure is human, growing more bestial as it nears the Earth.³⁵

However, within this ritual it is stressed that Pan is also the Egyptian Goat of Mendes. Indeed, the Golden Dawn linked the whole of the Tarot to Egyptian origins, something that Kathleen Raine has described as ‘at once a justification and a bridge of an introduction of an Egyptian pantheon into a system basically Cabbalistic’.³⁶ This is indicative of the Golden Dawn’s overall emphasis: in terms of the ancients, the Order’s preference was for all things Egyptian rather than all things Greek. Thus while Pan had his place, he was by no means the special god of the Golden Dawn magicians.

The number of Egyptian references within Golden Dawn is far too plentiful to discuss here in their entirety, but an examination of the Neophyte ritual should be enough to illustrate the way in which Egyptian images were employed. The Neophyte ceremony was the ritual that initiated members onto the first rung of the Golden Dawn ladder and was designed to be reflective of all occult learning that was to come. The ceremony gave pride of place to two pillars, symbolic of the gateway to occult wisdom. This was taken from freemasonry and reminiscent of the pillars of King Solomon; what was new was that the pillars were now inscribed with hieroglyphics taken from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, with special emphasis on chapter 17 (which identifies the deceased with the creator god Atum, offers a synopsis of the *Book of the Dead*, and which is especially richly illustrated) and chapter 125 (which contains the central spell of the Judgement of the Dead, with its denial of sin on the part of the dead). At the base of the pillars rose the Egyptian lotus flowers, symbols of regeneration and metempsychosis. Mathers wrote that the pillars depicted the symbolism of the passage of the soul from the Egyptian ritual

³⁴ Aleister Crowley, *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley: An Autohagiography*, eds. John Symonds and Kenneth Grant (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 204.

³⁵ Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, II. 183-4.

³⁶ Kathleen Raine, *Yeats the Initiate* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1986), 178.

which was a synthetic aspect to be developed and explained with the advance of the candidate through the various stages.³⁷

The officers of the ritual took on Egyptian god-forms: the Hierophant was Osiris and Aroueris, Horus the Elder; the Hierus was Horus; the Hegemon was Thmaa; the Kerus was Anubis of the East; the Solistes was Auramo-ooth; the Dadouchos was Thaum-Aesch-Niaeth; and the Sentinel was Anubis of the West. The chiefs of the ritual – the Imperator, Praemonstrator, and Cancellarius – took the Egyptian forms, Nephthys, Isis and Tho-oth respectively. The ritual also involved invisible guardians who were positioned around the outer circle of the temple and known as ‘invisible stations’. In the Neophyte grade these were Hathor, Harpokrat, an Evil Persona either (Apophis or Set), the Children of Horus, the Kerubim, and the forty-two Assessors (the witnesses in the Judgement Hall of Osiris).³⁸ Mathers described that in the final scene of the ritual the Neophyte is shown that

Osiris sits in his shrine up on a throne, with the Crook and Scourge, symbols of mercy and severity, in his hands; behind him are Isis and Nephthys, the Goddesses of Nature and Perfection, and before him are the Genii of the Dead, upon the Lotus Flower.³⁹

The Grand Word given to the initiate during the ceremony also took an Egyptian form, the Egyptian word for silence – ‘Har Par Krat’.⁴⁰

Given the predominance of Egyptian gods and symbols, it is perhaps not surprising that after his Neophyte initiation W.T. Horton told Yeats that many Egyptian faces were coming to him. Indeed, it was his initiation that stimulated an interest in ancient Egypt. He wrote that he began to draw pictures of Isis and Ptah and that the word Men-Kau-Ra came to his inner ear. This, he later found out, was a ruler of the Egyptian fourth dynasty renown for his virtue and justice.⁴¹ His interest in Egyptian gods is also reflected in his illustrated book, *The Way of the Soul* (1910). This is dedicated to Neferari Isi-nofer and contains many pictures of Isis and Osiris, including the cover picture of

³⁷ In Gilbert, *Sorcerer and Apprentice*, 47.

³⁸ As described in Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, III. 116-23 and R.G. Torrens, *The Secret Rituals of the Golden Dawn* (Wellingborough: Antiquarian Press, 1973), 52-4.

³⁹ In Gilbert, *Sorcerer and Apprentice*, 47.

⁴⁰ Gilbert, *Golden Dawn Companion*, 86.

⁴¹ Letter dated 28 March 1896, in George Mills Harper, *W.B. Yeats and W.T. Horton – The Record of an Occult Friendship* (London: MacMillan, 1980), 93.

Isis which within the book accompanies the verse 'Isis, Mother of all the gods/ By Thee th'aspiring Soul doth rise'.⁴²

Horton's special interest in Osiris and Isis is not atypical. If one is to single out the most important gods and goddesses in the Golden Dawn, a good case can be made for Osiris and Isis. In mythology, these gods are brother and sister, man and wife, and the key story centres round the murder of Osiris and his revival by Isis. Osiris is the main figure in the *Book of the Dead* and many of the Golden Dawn rituals used the text in an attempt to unite man with Osiris the Redeemer. Through her role as Osiris's reviver and also, in a further myth, the reviver of their son Horus, Isis was particularly prominent since ancient times. Ancient Egyptians thought it necessary for them to secure her favour and protection since they believed eternal life and death were in her hands and as time went by they increasingly ascribed her power equal to the chief god in the Egyptian pantheon, Ra. Reverence for Isis can be seen in the very name of the Golden Dawn's first temple, Isis-Urania, which is also analogous to Venus, the occult planet which was believed to represent the supernal deities of the Third Order. In the Order's consecration of the lotus wand, the adept called to Isis as the mistress of magic, 'O Isis! Great Goddess of the Forces of Nature, let Thine Influence descend and consecrate this Wand which I dedicate to Thee for the performance of the works of the Magic of light'.⁴³ Similarly, in the Transformation Ritual it is Isis who is invoked to progress the Great Work and illuminate spiritual vision. The adept cried:

O Mother. O Archetype Eternal of Maternity and Love. O Mother, the flower of all Mothers, whose voice all Amenti hears. Speak unto me and manifest about me that I may rise from the chaos, from the world of shapeless and illusory forms, of dead men's husks, and unsubstantial things. O Isis, great queen of Heaven, supernal splendour which dwellest in that light to which no man approach, wherein is Mystery and awful silence, come unto me, and make open the gates of bliss. Hail unto Thee, O thou mighty mother. Isis unveil thou, O soul of Nature, giving life and energy to the Universe. From thee all things do proceed. Unto thee all must return. Thou springest from the Sun of splendour, shrouded from all. Lead me to the truth, bright maiden of the Night, and guide me in all my wanderings in darkness, as I travel upwards and onwards to the light of the Eternal Crown. Come forth O gracious Mother. Come unto me and dwell within my heart, Thou who art crowned with Starlight, who shineth amongst the Lords of Truth; whose place is in the abode of the Light of Heaven. Isis.⁴⁴

⁴² W.T. Horton, *The Way of the Soul* (London: William Rider, 1910), Isis poem and reprint of cover picture 173-5.

⁴³ Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, III. 44-5.

⁴⁴ Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, III. 239-47.

The series of instruction documents issued periodically for members of the inner order, known as the 'flying rolls', contain an account of a vision of Isis experienced by two adepts, Farr and Elaine Simpson on 10th November 1892. Isis appeared to them, 'a Woman of Heroic proportions clothed in Green, with a jewelled girdle, a crown of stars on her head, in her hand a sceptre of Gold, having at the apex a lustrously white closed lotus flower; in her left hand an orb becoming a Cross'. She called herself 'the mighty Mother Isis; most powerful of all the world' and explained that she is the Holy Grail and the heart of love. The women solemnly swore to keep the Grail and believed that henceforth they were to be in touch with Isis's courage and power, the 'strongest Force in the World'.⁴⁵ This incident illustrates the reverence and concern afforded to Isis as well as highlighting Farr's interest in and fascination with ancient Egypt.

As already stated, Farr was a leading member of the Golden Dawn. As an actress, the performance aspect of rituals appealed to her and due to her natural ability she swiftly moved up the ranks. Throughout her occult career, it was Egypt that occupied the central position in her thoughts. Yeats wrote that Farr's sitting room 'was soon a reflection of her mind, the walls were covered with musical instruments, pieces of Oriental drapery, and Egyptian gods and goddesses painted by herself at the British Museum'.⁴⁶ She was the author of several works on Egypt, including the volume on Egyptian magic in Westcott's *Collectanea Hermetica*, and two plays (which she co-wrote with Olivia Shakespear), *The Beloved of Hathor* and *The Shrine of the Golden Hawk* (c.1902). Her scholarly works bear witness to considerable learning in Egyptology and her plays give us a flavour of her beliefs. Both plays employ a device often used in Victorian historical novels, whereby the scene is one in which the old and good religion (in this case, of Egypt) is in need of restoration. This obviously mirrors Farr's own desires. Even in these works of fiction Farr cannot resist putting in an academic reference, stating at the end of the *Golden Hawk* that the final ecstasy of the priestess-heroine, Nectoris, is 'quoted thought for thought from the earliest Egyptian texts which have yet been discovered' and so arguing that we

⁴⁵ Florence Farr and Elaine Simpson, 'Flying Roll No. 4: An Example of Mode attaining to Spirit Vision and What was seen by Two Adepts – S.S.D.D. and F. on November 10th 1892', Yorke Collection, NS57.

⁴⁶ W.B. Yeats, *Autobiographies* (London: MacMillan, 1955), 123.

can learn from the ancient world that the gods were states and not persons.⁴⁷ In addition, the *Beloved of Hathor* bears strong reminiscences to Mathers's Rites of Isis (rites he was undertaking at this time and which we shall examine later). This illustrates that these plays were no mere fancy, but rather, for Farr, contained truths.

Farr's concern for the Egyptian element in magic led to her setting up a group within the Golden Dawn which concentrated specifically on Egyptian magic. This group, the 'Sphere Group', was the direct result of Farr's astral meeting with a mysterious Egyptian adept in the British Museum in 1895. The adept claimed to be of the grade 8-3; a grade in the Third Order and so beyond attainment of mere mortals. Farr wrote to Mathers to confirm the validity of the adept's claims and Mathers, accepting the contact, allowed a group to be set up.⁴⁸ In May 1896 Farr initially worked with Allan Bennett, F.L. Gardner and Charles Rosher in the evocation of Taphtarharath, adapting traditional Western rituals to include Egyptian techniques from the *Book of the Dead*. The more formal Sphere Group was formed later, in the summer of 1898. Little is known about the work of the Sphere Group but it is clear that it concentrated primarily on the study and practice of Egyptian formulae and that an Egyptian figure occupied the centre of the ceremonies. Membership is uncertain, but according to Robert Felkin the original group consisted of himself and Farr, Ada Waters, Cecilia Macrae, Marcus Blackden, Helen Rand, Harrietta Butler, Edmund Hunter, Fanny Hunter, Florence Kennedy, Henrietta Paget and Robert Palmer Thomas.⁴⁹ These individuals too must have been particularly intrigued by Egyptian ideas. Two published works exist as evidence. One is by Rosher, one of the original workers in Egyptian magic, and is a volume of poetry published in 1897. The poetry is accompanied by three drawings by Moina Mathers all of which are entrenched in Egyptian symbols and imagery. The volume also bears a title picture by Rosher of a winged figure wearing Egyptian headdress rising between two pillars.⁵⁰ These pictures can be seen to reflect both Moina Mathers's and Rosher's interest in Egypt. The second is Blackden's *Ritual of the Mystery of the Soul* (1914) which draws on

⁴⁷ Florence Farr and Olivia Shakespear, *The Beloved of Hathor and The Shrine of the Golden Hawk* (Croydon: Farncombe and Son, the exact date is unknown; 1902 is the suggested date written in pencil on the copy in the Yorke Collection).

⁴⁸ Letter from Farr to J.R. Brodie-Innes dated 17 January 1901 in Harper, *Yeats's Golden Dawn*, 221-3.

⁴⁹ Robert Felkin, 'The Group as I Knew It', cited in Howe, *Magicians of the Golden Dawn*, 251.

a reinterpretation of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* and, has been suggested by Howe, may reflect the Sphere workings.⁵¹

Due to internal differences and concerns about the predominance of Egyptian influences (as we shall examine further below), the first Sphere Group, which was controlled by an Egyptian astral form, only lasted until 1901. The second Sphere Group existed between 1901 and 1902 and had the Grail as its centre. Although this is usually seen as a shift away from Egyptian workings and there is considerable cataloguing of the group's Enochian experiments, Farr's earlier pledge to Isis and her equation of the Grail with Isis illustrates that, in her mind at least, the shift may not necessarily have been quite so absolute. A series of articles by Farr published in *The Occult Review* in 1908 about Egyptian magic reveal that her interest persisted. Butler has also detailed rituals that Farr wrote for later, albeit shadowy, orders that she set up: the *SOS* (perhaps standing for the 'Servants of Osiris') and the *GOTS* (perhaps the 'Great Osiris the Saviour'). These rituals date from 1914 but some include notes that they were collected from Egyptian records in 1899 or 1900.⁵² There is also evidence of the nature of the *SOS* in A.E. Waite's diary entry of 22nd March 1903, in which he writes of his initiation into order and, despite not naming the rite, refers to the symbolism, ethos and essence as all Egyptian.⁵³

Through the examination above, the influence of Egyptian elements upon the Order is clearly evident; however, it remains to be established why ancient Egypt, rather than ancient Greece or Rome, held such an important place. I would argue that Egypt held a prominent position, firstly, because it was largely perceived to be the original source of magical knowledge and learning. The Order looked to the Greek Hermetic writings and the Gnostic literature of the Roman Empire and saw these (as scholars usually agree they are) as but later developments of Egyptian wisdom. In employing this idea the Golden Dawn was following a line of thought which had gained credence in Western Europe from the fifteenth century. The 'Historical Lecture' emphasised the antiquity of Egyptian thought, stating,

⁵⁰ Moina Mathers's drawings accompany the poems 'Via Lucis', 'Thought', and 'The Wooing of the Cloud' in Charles Rosher, *Poems* (London: Haas and Co, 1897).

⁵¹ Howe, *Magicians of the Golden Dawn*, 251.

⁵² Butler, 'Intellectual Origins', 89. Butler notes that the possible Order names have been suggested by R.A. Gilbert, "'Seeking that which was lost": More Light on the Origins and Development of the Golden Dawn' in *Yeats Annual 14: Yeats and the Nineties*, (2001), 33-49.

but even the revival of mysticism was but a new development of the vastly older wisdom of the Kabbalistic Rabbis and of the most ancient of all secret knowledge, the magic of the Egyptians, in which the Bible itself tells us that Moses, the founder of the Jewish system was 'learned', that is, in which he had been initiated.⁵⁴

In his introduction to the Abramelin manuscript, Mathers asserted more forthrightly that the 'root and origin' of the cabbala is 'evidently to be sought' in the Egyptian mysteries.⁵⁵ It should be emphasised here that the Golden Dawn did purport to be a Christian Order. Whether in fact this was the case will be examined below, but for now we can at least recognise that the problem of a Christian Order relying on pagan wisdom is nicely tied up by placing Egyptian knowledge at the heart of the Hebraic tradition.

This leads on to the second factor at work, namely, that nineteenth century Egyptologists tended to stress the religious and 'Christian' nature of the ancient Egyptians. This acted as a conservative force within Victorian England and had the effect of presenting the Egyptians as both similar to modern Christians and morally superior. Members of the Golden Dawn are likely to have subscribed to similar views. For example, Farr wrote, 'the Egyptians believe everything that Europeans believe; but their faith was so great that it influenced their conduct in their public life and in their private relations'.⁵⁶ Another Golden Dawn member, Percy Bullock, wrote,

The further we look back upon Egyptian civilisation the more spiritually enlightened does it appear and not vice-versa, and the whole contemporaneous testimony of history goes rather to support the conclusion that man has descended from a divine ancestry than the reverse proposition of the Darwinian school.⁵⁷

Thus Bullock believed in the superior religiosity of ancient Egypt to such an extent that he could use it to defend Christianity against Darwinism. While this view of Egypt exerted a conservative appeal, the third reason for emphasis on Egypt within the Golden Dawn held appeal for more radical and adventurous reasons. This was the view that ancient Egypt was a mysterious and exotic land and, that precisely because it was so

⁵³ In Gilbert, *Revelations of the Golden Dawn*, 147.

⁵⁴ Westcott, 'Historical Lecture', 100.

⁵⁵ S.L. MacGregor Mathers, *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage* (London: John M. Watkins, 1898), xxxv.

⁵⁶ Florence Farr, 'The Egyptian Use of Symbols' in *Occult Review*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (1908) repr. in Florence Farr, *The Magic of a Symbol*, ed. Darcy Kuntz (Edmonds, Washington: Holmes Publishing, 1996), 16.

strange, it held more allure than ancient Greece and Rome. For example, Kathleen Raine has argued that whereas the numinosity of Venus, Cupid, Apollo and company had long since faded because they had become common currency, Thoth, Isis, Osiris, Horus, Hathor and Maat were imbued with the charm of novelty and exoticism.⁵⁸

Added to these three factors, the nineteenth century archaeological discoveries and advances in Egyptology both shaped and stimulated the Golden Dawn's interest in ancient Egypt. This can be seen initially in the cipher manuscript, which contained many Egyptian references. One of the reasons why it was later proved to be a fake was because of its use of the Egyptian Rituals of the Dead, which had been unknown prior to the nineteenth century. The author of the cipher manuscript is unclear; it may have been Kenneth Mackenzie, or maybe Westcott, or maybe a hybrid of authors where the Egyptian references were added later. Either way, the inclusion of Egyptian references shows the influence of the recent developments in Egyptology on the Golden Dawn and reminds us that the Golden Dawn and its workings can not be viewed in isolation from the wider situation of the time.

In October 1886 Blavatsky described the intertwined relationship between Egyptology and occultism:

There is hardly a hieratic papyrus exhumed along with the swathed mummy of King or Priest-Hierophant, or a weather-beaten, indecipherable inscription from the tormented sites of Babylonia or Nineveh, or an ancient tile-cylinder – that does not furnish new food for thought or some suggestive information to the student of Occultism.⁵⁹

Indeed, although Blavatsky's own occultism primarily promoted eastern wisdom, she was undoubtedly interested in ancient Egypt. C.E. Beechhofer recalled a gathering in September 1875 in which the name for her society was being debated; apparently the names 'Egyptological', 'Hermetic', and 'Rosicrucian' were all strongly considered, and 'Theosophical' only decided upon after coming across the word in a dictionary.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Originally a lecture delivered to the Theosophical Society Adelphi Lodge; published as Percy W. Bullock, *Egyptian Belief* (London: Theosophical Publishing, 1893), 21.

⁵⁸ Raine, *Yeats the Initiate*, 178.

⁵⁹ H.P. Blavatsky, 'Ancient Magic and Modern Science' in *The Theosophist*, Vol. 8 (October 1886); repr. in H.P. Blavatsky, *Ancient Egyptian Magic* (India: Theosophical Publishing, 1914), 4.

⁶⁰ C.E. Beechhofer, *The Mysterious Madame* (London: 1931), cited in S.B. Liljegren, 'Bulwer-Lytton's Novels and Isis Unveiled' in S.B. Liljegren, ed. *Essays and Studies on English Language and Literature*, No. 18 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1957).

Furthermore, the title of her main work, *Isis Unveiled* (1877), reveals that, in her early life at least, Egypt was on her mind. The work's title and ideas were largely inspired by Godfrey Higgins's *Anacalypsis: An Attempt to Draw Aside the Veil of the Saitic Isis* (1836), which claimed the existence of a mystical ancient nation that had passed its spiritual ideas onto the ancient Egyptians, Chaldeans, Indians, Hebrews and Druids, and described the veiled Isis, which Plutarch had made mention to, as symbolic of all cosmic knowledge.⁶¹ This text would have been a known to both Blavatsky and her readers.

In 1957, S.B. Liljegren highlighted Blavatsky's early interest in Egypt and argued that this was in part derived from the influence of Edward Bulwer-Lytton's novels, in particular his historical novel, *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834), and his Rosicrucian romance, *Zanoni* (1842), both of which stress the centrality of Egypt in wisdom and the occult.⁶² This therefore points to another strain of influence on nineteenth century occultism: the conception of Egypt in literature. Lytton was certainly greatly admired by members of the Golden Dawn and it was believed that *Zanoni* displayed such knowledge that Lytton himself must be a Rosicrucian adept. Despite proclaims by the writer to the contrary, in 1871 he was made Grand Patron of the *SRIA*. In 1916 Westcott still held this belief, asserting that Lytton had been initiated into a German Rosicrucian lodge at Frankfurt-on-the-Main.⁶³ The account of *Zanoni* finding a deciphered manuscript in a bookshop is likely to have strongly influenced the Golden Dawn's own founding story. It is thus interesting to note the influence of romantically styled novels upon the Golden Dawn, which itself constructed a romantic account of its origins.

Liljegren argued that it was later, when Blavatsky believed Egypt had become too worked over, too much in the geo-political frame, and too exploited, that her attentions turned primarily to India and Tibet, as remote places in which she could place her spiritual ideas and in which they could thrive largely uncontested, because the place was unknown.⁶⁴ For others however, the very increase of knowledge about Egypt encouraged

⁶¹ Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, 18.

⁶² Liljegren, 'Bulwer-Lytton's Novels'.

⁶³ William Wynn Westcott, 'Data of the History of the Rosicrucians' (London: 1916); repr. in *The Magical Mason: The Forgotten Hermetic Writings of William Wynn Westcott, Physician and Magus*, ed. R.A. Gilbert (Wellingborough: Antiquarian Press, 1983), 29-39, 33. Westcott was no doubt also encouraged by the account by Lytton's grandson published in 1913 asserting that he was a Rosicrucian adept. V.A.G.R. Lytton, *The Life of Edward Bulwer, First Lord Lytton* (London: Macmillan, 1913).

⁶⁴ Liljegren, 'Bulwer-Lytton's Novels'.

a greater interest in it. Farr, who was concerned with reviving Egyptian practices rather than constructing her own spiritual and magical system, avidly followed and enjoyed all developments. Farr's letters to Gardner expresses this kind of enthusiasm; for example, in one, she describes that she has found a key to the inscription of the Tomb of Seti in one of Petrie's books and that she wants to cut up the plates and put them where she believes they belong to give the book greater occult value.⁶⁵ For her, Egyptian wisdom was attractive precisely because 'in studying Egyptian magic one has at once a thoroughly scientific satisfaction. One is troubled with no vague theories; but receives precise practical details; we observe that every square inch of the Upper and Under Worlds is mapped out'.⁶⁶

Mathers, the foremost moulder of the Golden Dawn and who largely produced the rituals of the Order, was also fascinated by Egyptology. Even in his early days at the British Museum, he told Waite that he had 'clothed himself in hieroglyphics'.⁶⁷ Mathers built upon the reputation of Egypt as the source of all magical lore to include recent developments in Egyptology. For example, an invocation that he taught to invoke the Higher Genius was taken from Charles Wycliffe Goodwin's publication in 1852 in the papers of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, *A Fragment of a Graeco-Egyptian Work Upon Magic*. Goodwin's fragment is part of a larger collection from Greco-Roman Egypt named by scholars, the Greek magical papyri, which contains a variety of magical spells, hymns and rituals and date from the second-century BCE to the fifth-century CE. Goodwin introduced this work as one containing 'fundamental ideas' which 'appear to be derived from the old Egyptian religion'. He went on to state that the Egyptians and Assyrians are sacred nations and so their languages have a 'peculiar sanctity which makes them an appropriate medium of communication with deity'. The fragment contained what the Greeks called 'barbarous names', nonsense names for gods of unclear origin. Goodwin argued that these names had been handed down from remote antiquity preserved 'inviolable and immutable' and that this character of immutability is peculiarly

⁶⁵ Letter by Farr to Gardner, Yorke Collection, NS73.

⁶⁶ Florence Farr, *Egyptian Magic* (Collectanea Hermetica, VIII; London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1896), 2.

⁶⁷ A.E. Waite, 'Notes of the Month' in *The Occult Review*, Vol. 29 (April, 1919), 197-9, 198.

acceptable to the gods.⁶⁸ The Egyptologist, Wallis Budge, also considered the use of barbarous names in his full length book, *Egyptian Magic* (1899), which contained a reproduction of Goodwin's fragment along with many other discoveries. Budge argued that names were highly significant in ancient Egypt, having a specific power in the sacred rites, and so should not be changed into later versions of the name.⁶⁹ Such emphasis by Egyptologists influenced the rituals in the Golden Dawn, which thus placed special emphasis on the Egyptian language and barbarous names.

Wallis Budge stands out as the foremost Egyptologist in terms of the study of Egyptian magic. It is considered that while Petrie did the most to make the Victorian public familiar with Egyptian archaeology, Budge was the one who made them familiar with Egyptian literature and thought.⁷⁰ In 1892 he was appointed Acting Keeper of the Egyptian Department in the British Museum and in 1894 he was promoted to Principal Keeper. The British Museum was very close to the Order's London temple and it is rumoured that Budge was not unsympathetic to the Order's pursuits and may well have aided members in their researches. Greer has even claimed that Budge may have sponsored a temple for the Order within the Museum.⁷¹ Whether there is any truth in such claims remains to be seen, but it is certain that Budge's work influenced the Order. The main thrust of this was through his publication of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*. In 1890 he first published one form of the Book, the *Papyrus of Ani*, and by 1901 he had published an English translation of the complete *Book of the Dead*. The book is a collection of hymns and prayers in ceremonial rituals to enable the dead man to unite himself with Osiris the Redeemer. However, the occultists of our period took the text up not merely as a collection of funerary spells, but instead as comprising of an initiatory magical ritual. We have already seen it used in this way by the Golden Dawn in the examination of the Neophyte ritual. Such views were also reflected in print. The freemason W. Marsham Adams first expounded an esoteric interpretation of the book in 1885, attempting to relate it to modern Masonic teachings and locating the place of

⁶⁸ 'Introduction' to C.W. Goodwin, ed. and trans., *Fragment of a Graeco-Egyptian Work Upon Magic From a Papyrus in the British Museum* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1852), vi-viii.

⁶⁹ E.A. Wallis Budge, *Egyptian Magic* (London: Kegan Paul, 1899; repr., London: Arkana, 1988), 157.

⁷⁰ S.R.K. Glanville, *The Growth and Nature of Egyptology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947), 10.

⁷¹ Greer, *Women of the Golden Dawn*, 430.

initiation as the Great Pyramid.⁷² Blackden's *Ritual of the Mystery of the Soul*, argued that the book was a ceremonial initiation for the living and that the ritual under particular consideration in his work was the final gateway to that degree of initiation ceremony, where the esoteric wisdom of the Egypt was taught, and thus of great importance.⁷³

Therefore, the lines between Egyptology and occultism were often blurred.⁷⁴ Members of the Golden Dawn used recently discovered papyri to furnish their Order with rituals while also attempting to reinterpret them as instances of esoteric thought, to render what they believed was the true nature of the papyri. Whether the members of the Golden Dawn most interested in ancient Egypt can in fact be described as Egyptologists themselves is a matter of debate. Farr was well versed in things Egyptian and in 1897 was controller of finance for the Egyptian Archaeological Society;⁷⁵ however, she never visited Egypt and at least one Order member, Waite, doubted her skills as an Egyptologist.⁷⁶ Blackden was certainly much more of a heavy weight and more like a 'real' Egyptologist. He was a member of the prestigious Egypt Exploration Fund (EEF) and the Archaeological Survey. Whichever interpretation is taken, the importance of Egypt within the Order remains pivotal. Ancient Egypt offered the charm of antiquity and an expanse of mystery, wisdom, and magic; Egyptology offered something new, vibrant and exciting. Taken together, for some magicians, the effect was intoxicating.

However, it is misleading to see the Golden Dawn in solely an Egyptian light, and it is misguided furthermore to view the Egyptian elements as distinct and separate. The Golden Dawn was based on a cabalistic framework but also drew on texts such as the Book of Abramelin and the work of the Elizabethan magician John Dee and his Enochian magical system. The pagan Egyptian element was woven into this system yet, rather than remaining a separate strand, it became absorbed into the whole mass of influences. The

⁷² W. Marsham Adams, *The House of the Hidden Places* (London: John Murray, 1885); he later wrote *The Book of the Master* (London: John Murray, 1898). Both works were collected in 1933 as *The Book of the Master of the Hidden Places*, complete with foreword by a Golden Dawn member, E.J. Langford Garstin, (repr., Wellingborough: Aquarius Press, 1980).

⁷³ M.W. Blackden, *Ritual of the Mystery of the Judgment of the Soul* (London: SRJA, 1914), 5.

⁷⁴ As well as rumours about Wallis Budge's practices, Blavatsky began rumours about the Egyptologist Gaston Maspero, claiming that while in Egypt she had converted him to Theosophy. Letter January 1885, cited in Liljegren, 'Bulwer-Lytton's Novels', 32.

⁷⁵ As expressed in a letter to F.L. Gardner, 6 August 1897, Yorke Collection, NS73.

⁷⁶ Commented on by Waite after attending a lecture by Farr in 1901 on Egyptology. In Gilbert, *Revelations of the Golden Dawn*, 147.

Order contained much Christian imagery, particularly in the Second Order and in reference to Christian Rosenkreuz, but, as Hough has stated, 'Christian symbols...had to take their place in the eclectic miscellany on equal terms with the rest'.⁷⁷ Thus the Golden Dawn was in fact an Order of profound syncretism; it adopted the gods, mythology, symbols and images of many different nations and traditions.

The use of syncretism can be seen throughout the Order rituals and so below I list but a few instances. For example, in the initiation ritual to the second grade, the Grade of Theoricus, the Hierophant describes the twenty-first key of the Tarot as a feminine divine figure who is at once, 'the Bride of the Apocalypse, the Kabbalistic Queen of the canticles, the Egyptian Isis or the Great Feminine Kerubic Angel Sandalphon on the left hand of the Mercy Seat of the Ark'.⁷⁸ In the initiation ritual into the Second Order, the Adeptus Minor Ritual, the symbolic drama of the ritual has as its goal the union of the aspirant with the divine nature of Christian Rosenkreutz. Rosenkreutz is portrayed as a living man, who symbolically died like the Egyptian Osiris, was glorified through trial, perfected through suffering and rose again in mystical resurrection. The seven-sided vault at the centre of the ritual symbolised the burial place of Christian Rosenkreutz and the tomb of Osiris. The adept was told the story of Rosenkreutz, which included his journey to Egypt and emphasised the great secrets he learned there.⁷⁹ Notably, this differed from the original legend of Rosenkreutz in which he travelled to the East but makes no mention of Egypt.⁸⁰ The Elemental Weapons used in the ritual were the dagger, which was based on the Medieval source the *Key of Solomon*, and the lotus wand, which was derived from the *Book of the Dead*. Mathers described the exaltation at the end of the ritual thus:

The key word is INRI. Three adepts represent Chesed, Geburah and Tiphereth. The creator, the destroyer and the Sacrificed one, ISIS, APOPHIS, and OSIRIS – the name IAO. The symbol of Osiris slain is the Cross; v is the sign of the mourning Isis: the sign of Typhon and Apophis: x the sign of Osiris risen;=LVX, the Light of the Cross, of that which symbolises the way into the Divine through Sacrifice.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Hough, *Mystery Religion*, 43.

⁷⁸ Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, II, 79.

⁷⁹ Detailed in 'Ritual 5-6 in hand of Allan Bennett', Yorke Collection, OS28, Notebook c1894, 1900.

⁸⁰ Liljegren has suggested that Bulwer-Lytton's *Zanoni* may have been influential in establishing the link between Rosicrucianism and Egypt. Liljegren, 'Bulwer-Lytton's Novels'.

⁸¹ MacGregor Mathers, 'Flying Roll No. 10: Concerning the Symbolism of Self Sacrifice and Crucifixion Contained in the 5=6 Grade by G.H. Frater D.D.C.F.', Yorke Collection, NS57.

We must next then consider why the Golden Dawn employed such extreme syncretism. Machen commented in his biography that this idea of embracing all races and ages was a distinctive 1880s frame of mind.⁸² Certainly this point holds much validity. The Theosophical Society was an expression of a high degree of syncretism, as was the Hermetic Society. Perhaps one of the appeals of this method was that it could result in popularity. The Golden Dawn could appeal to a wide range of people with a wide range of beliefs, recruiting both Christians and ardent admirers of ancient Egypt. Indeed, many Christians were members of the Order. In the extreme, Ayton who joined the Order in 1894, carried on his duties as the vicar of Charcombe. Such a recruiting device is consistent with Mathers's desire to create the greatest magical order the world had ever seen.

Also, there was the nineteenth century ability to negotiate Christianity to suit the modern situation. This may have allowed some of the Order's Christian members to absorb other religious influences while retaining a broadly Christian framework. For example, Yeats argued that 'our Order is not anti-Christian...it teaches dependence only in the inner divinity, but this *is* Christianity'.⁸³ He further illuminated his own, somewhat syncretistic, ideas about Christianity by stating, 'the Christ who has moved the world was half Indian half Greek in temper. He saw the world as a fire of love, but from this fire fell not the Hebraic, the moral self-indulgence of a sensual race – but a pure Greek light'.⁸⁴ However, the relationship between the Golden Dawn and Christianity did not always run smoothly. Horton eventually left the Order because he felt that it went against his belief as a Christian.⁸⁵ Farr's first Sphere Group came under attack from the more Christian members of the Order, led by Annie Horniman. Ayton's letters to Gardner are full of reflections of guilt that a Church of England clergyman should be engaging in these unconventional pursuits.⁸⁶ Furthermore, the Golden Dawn's inability to cater for people with such differing beliefs contributed to its eventual downfall, as we shall see below.

⁸² Machen, *Things Near and Far*, 152-4.

⁸³ Harper, *Yeats and Horton*, 8.

⁸⁴ Letter dated 29 July 1917 in *Ibid.*, 136.

⁸⁵ Letter dated 29 April 1896 in *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸⁶ See Ellic Howe, ed. *The Alchemist of the Golden Dawn: Letters of Rev. W.A. Ayton to F.L. Gardner and others 1886-1905* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1985).

In order to fully understand the use of syncretism in the Order, we must recognise that the Golden Dawn was a magical, not a religious, Order. Moina Mathers argued that the Order's work was more than religion, herself believing that religion had had its day:

The answer of the ancient world to this cry of the Spirit of Humanity is to be found in the establishment of the Mysteries, as containing in their penetralia that which even the highest then known forms of religion had not namely, a philosophico-religious reply resumed in Formulas and Ceremonies, to the problems of Life and Death, of Nature, of the Gods, of Spiritual Beings, etc, and lastly of the linking of these as a whole back to the First Cause of all things.⁸⁷

The Golden Dawn, in part, represented an inquiry into these ancient Mysteries and religious symbols were employed to facilitate such investigation. Indeed, ancient mystery religions did not constitute adherence to a religion in the sense associated with Judaism, Christianity and Islam and were not exclusive. The ancient mysteries took the form of religious symbols and images, and it was the place of the individual to discover the secrets hidden therein. Unlike religious doctrine, mysticism afforded man the opportunity to discover true revelation for himself.

Yeats was attracted to the Golden Dawn because of this emphasis on symbolism and mysticism. He linked this closely to his work as a poet, writing that it facilitated what he wanted: 'a system of thought, which could leave the imagination free to create'.⁸⁸ He believed that true art (that which is not mere story-telling or portraiture) always entangles part of the Divine Essence and so entails revelation. Thus, Yeats sought a system that could enable him as an artist to unlock his hidden creative spirits and instincts. He was a leading light in the symbolist movement in literature, apparent in Britain towards the end of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. He encouraged fellow artists, such as Horton, to use symbols to creatively discover the meaning of life and the world.⁸⁹ As a divine mission, symbolism amounted to a sacred language, a mysterious communication between man and his divinity. Yeats stated that 'every symbol is an invocation, which produces its equivalent expression in all worlds'.⁹⁰ This sentiment was at the heart of Golden Dawn ideas: the Order used religious symbols in order to tap into mysterious

⁸⁷ Moina Mathers, 'Preface' to *Kabbalah Unveiled*, viii.

⁸⁸ Yeats, *A Vision*, xi.

⁸⁹ See Harper, *Yeats and Horton*, passim.

⁹⁰ W.B. Yeats, 'Autobiography: First Draft' in *Memoirs*, ed. D. Donoghue (London: MacMillan, 1972), 128.

truths. This suggests a further reason as to why Egyptian imagery was so popular. As Michael Rice explains in *Egypt's Legacy* (1997):

Much of the world which surrounded the Egyptians was expressed in symbols, indeed, they rarely expressed a concept directly in absolute terms. It was part of the Egyptians' psychological equipment that this should be so...this tendency towards the veiled meaning, the equivocal appearance, became a sort of game which Egypt played with the world outside its frontiers...their writing appears at first sight at once familiar and deeply obscure...Egyptian forms rarely reveal their true meaning at first glance...they are therefore symbolic, and in a literal sense, occult.⁹¹

Thus Egypt may well have been so popular in the Golden Dawn because it offered a good source of symbols. In terms of a religious system, this meant that the gods and goddesses represented or invoked were not worshipped, but used for their symbolic merit.

Having removed the religious significance of the various deities, syncretism was furthermore possible and desirable because of the perceived connections between all major religions. This idea was closely linked to Blavatsky's concept of a world religion. Moina Mathers reflected the Golden Dawn's belief, writing that

all the Sacred Books, be they the Bible, the Qabalah, the Egyptian Books, the Vedantic teachings, the Druidic traditions – all use Symbols of the Rose and the Lily or Lotus, and the Cross – these reveal themselves as veritable living images of some great fundamental truth. Any student must inevitably study this symbolism.⁹²

Thus universal symbols, those found in more than one religion, were particularly venerated. This explains, for example, the emphasis on the slain and risen god-man, as represented by Osiris, Jesus and Christian Rosenkreutz; and the feminine divine figure, as represented by Isis, Mary and Venus. In this light we can understand what Mathers meant when he wrote that the Golden Dawn 'teaches respect for the truths of all religions, as well as for the religious feelings and ideals of our neighbours'.⁹³ Significantly, this emphasis also meant that primary importance lay at the feet of the initiate rather than the deity upon which he called.

⁹¹ Michael Rice, *Egypt's Legacy: The Archetypes of Western Civilisation 3000-30BC* (London: Routledge, 1997), 194; 198.

⁹² Moina Mathers, 'Preface' to *Kabbalah Unveiled*, ix.

⁹³ King, *Ritual Magic*, 81.

Having examined the presence of paganism in the apparatus of the Golden Dawn, we should now turn to examine the presence of paganism in the Order's methods and emphasis. In 1875 Mackenzie likened magic to psychology, writing 'magic is a psychological branch of science, dealing with the sympathetic effects of stones, drugs, herbs and living substances upon the imaginative and reflective faculties'.⁹⁴ This psychological emphasis is important because it gets to the heart of modern magical matters. Magic in the Golden Dawn laid great emphasis on man: his place in the universe, his will-power, and his multi-faceted personality. Gerald Yorke has argued that owing to the nature of Mathers's temperament, the Order employed a pagan, Egyptian twist in its whole system: 'instead of working through and in the name of the deity of the force invoked, he preferred to inflame himself with prayer and become whatever it might be'.⁹⁵ In order to understand this system precisely we must examine magical concepts of the Golden Dawn further, especially its ideas about man and his relation to the gods. In realising the role and place of the adept we can more truly appreciate the Golden Dawn and its saturation in pagan ideas.

One of the most important influences on the Golden Dawn's concept of man and magic were the Hermetic texts. The Hermetic texts are a category of ancient literature purporting to contain secret wisdom attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, a syncretism of the Greek god Hermes and the Egyptian god Thoth. They take the form of dialogues, usually between Hermes and one of his pupils, often relations of Egyptian or Greek divinities. The surviving texts comprise the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which is the first seventeen Greek treatises, and the *Asclepius*, which are forty Latin Hermetic texts and fragments.⁹⁶ Collections of some of the Hermetic texts were first compiled in the modern era by Italian scholars during the Renaissance, the most well known of which being Marsilio Ficino's *The Divine Pymander* (1471), which contained the first fourteen Greek treatises. Westcott's edition of *The Pymander* (the second volume of the *Collectanea Hermetica*), introduced the text as of supreme value since it combined Theosophy, alchemy and magic. Westcott emphasised that though the texts have not come down to us

⁹⁴ In *Ibid.*, 28-9.

⁹⁵ Yorke, 'Foreword' in Howe, *Magicians*, xv.

⁹⁶ For a full account of the Hermetic literature see Brian P. Copenhauer, *Hermetica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

in their original form, they 'do yet enshrine the very old Egyptian ideals and are almost the only remains now existing of the Wisdom of the hierophants of the Nile Valley'.⁹⁷ Herein lies the crux of texts' importance. Throughout our period of study, these writings were considered to belong to Pharaohnic, pre-Alexandrian Egypt; it was only later on in the twentieth century that the texts were construed to be the product of Christian, Gnostic thought. Thus the Hermetic texts were believed to be of vital importance by both Egyptologists and occultists during our period of study. Indeed, there was a flurry of English translations of the Hermetica; alongside Westcott's the most notable of these are from the Edinburgh scholar, J.D. Chambers in 1882, the Hermetic Society's *The Virgin of the World* by Kingsford and Maitland (1885), and the theosophist G.R.S. Mead's numerous publications, beginning in 1906. The Hermetic texts are significant for our purposes, both for the way in which they influenced the magical practices of our period and for the fact they derived a large portion of their worth from a belief that they contained the secret wisdom of the ancient Egyptians.

Francis King has neatly placed the fundamental principles of Golden Dawn magic into three categories.⁹⁸ Within all three of these categories Hermetic wisdom is strongly evident. Firstly, King identified a belief in a system of correspondences. This is belief that the universe as a whole (macrocosm) corresponds to the individual human being (microcosm). The notion is based on the Hermetic maxim '*Quod superius sicut quod inferius*' meaning 'as above so below'; thus any principle which exists in the cosmos also exists in man, and so earthly things are echoes of spiritual things. Farr noted the importance of this idea in *Egyptian Magic*, writing that 'from the first step even, the Aspirant was taught to look upon himself as the centre of a universe of instinctive force, made on the pattern of the vast universe of which he formed a microscopic portion'.⁹⁹ Similarly, Moina Mathers wrote for the Order's twenty-first Flying Roll: 'when you can know the God of yourself it will be possible to obtain a dim vision of the God of All, for the God of the Macrocosm only reflects Himself to Man through the God of Man's Microcosm.'¹⁰⁰ In terms of practising magic, this idea meant that the occultist can either

⁹⁷ William Wynn Westcott, ed. *The Pyramider of Hermes* (Collectanea Hermetica, II), iii-iv.

⁹⁸ King, *Ritual Magic*, 54-7.

⁹⁹ Florence Farr, *Egyptian Magic*, 83.

¹⁰⁰ Moina Mathers, 'Know Thyself'.

‘call down’ into himself a cosmic force which he desires to tap, or ‘call up’ that same cosmic force from the depths of his own being. This is known respectively as invocation and evocation. These cosmic forces carry the names of different deities and this rendered deities to be seen as personalities in their own right and as personifications of cosmic principles.

Linked to this idea is a belief in the system of classification, whereby a definite relation is perceived between colours, shapes, numbers, and so on, and the various spiritual factors that make up the universe. This idea is derived from the *Asclepius*, which tells that man-made images can be transformed from mere representations of cosmic principles into magical objects with life and intelligence of their own. This point leads on to the second fundamental belief in Golden Dawn magic: the belief that the properly trained human will is capable of anything. Yeats highlighted the importance of this principle stating, ‘everything we formulate in the imagination, if we formulate it strongly enough, realises itself in the circumstances of life, acting either through our own souls, or through the spirits of nature’.¹⁰¹ Therefore, emphasis was placed on the imagination. Farr similarly expressed the idea in *A Short Enquiry Concerning the Hermetic Art*, writing that whereas imagination in the modern world tended to be equated with ‘extravagant fancy’, it should in fact be seen as the invisible part of Man (the visible part being his body).¹⁰² In terms of magic, this meant that the laws of nature could be at the mercy of man if he was sufficiently trained. Symbols were important in relation to the will of the adept because they were aids to the concentration of will.

Thirdly, Golden Dawn magic rested on the idea that there are planes and intelligences other than those in physical incarnation. King argues that not all believed this as fact but it was used as a reasonable working hypothesis.¹⁰³ In this line of thinking man is placed half-way up the ladder of evolution, and not at its top. This was based on Hermetic texts which were concerned with the true place of humans and which suggested that divine powers are latent within men. The second and perhaps most famous book of *The Divine Pymander*, *Poimandres* or *The Vision*, is most important in this context. It

¹⁰¹ W.B. Yeats ‘Is the Order of the R.R. et A.C. to Remain a Magical Order’ (1901; repr. in Harper, *Yeats’s Golden Dawn*, 265.

¹⁰² Florence Farr, *A Short Enquiry Concerning the Hermetic Art* (Collectanea Hermetica, III), 11.

¹⁰³ King, *Ritual Magic*, 56.

tells of how original man had his natural dwelling in the stars where he had direct knowledge of God and understanding of the universe, but that original man fell in love with his own reflection in the waters of earth and descended. This meant that man as he is today is an immortal spirit capable of divinity but trapped in a mortal body. He is able to achieve liberation from matter and union with God only if able to understand his inner nature. This idea was how Mead decided to conclude his *Thrice Greatest Hermes* (1906); quoting from the eleventh book of *The Divine Pyramander* he wrote:

If, then, thou dost not make thyself like unto God, thou canst not know Him. For like is knowable to like alone. Make thou thyself to grow to the same stature as the Greatness which transcends all measure; leap forth from any Body; transcend all Time; become Eternity; and then shalt thou know God.¹⁰⁴

These three concepts of magic all highlight the divine potentiality of man. Having examined these concepts, we can now understand what Mathers meant when he would repeat and have his friends repeat, ‘there is no part of me that is not of the gods’,¹⁰⁵ or what Yeats meant when he wrote that the Golden Dawn was an order that ‘reaches up to the throne of God himself’.¹⁰⁶ It was in the Second Order of the Golden Dawn that adepts attempted to attain these objectives; as Westcott wrote, ‘in the Second Order, we are still very human but not only human – we are *attempting* to be ultra-human, i.e. divine’.¹⁰⁷ Thus on admission to the Second Order the candidate swore, ‘to purify and exalt my Spiritual Nature, that with the Divine aid, I may at length attain to be more than human, and thus gradually raise and unite myself to my Higher and Divine Genius’.¹⁰⁸

This practice caused the magician to be the central figure in all magical workings. As Hutton describes, ‘it was a therapy designed to enable human beings to evolve further into divinities, or to bring forth the divinity already within them’.¹⁰⁹ This was a revival of theurgy, a ritual technique designed to enable humans to blend with divinity of their own will. The art and practice of theurgy derived from the Neo-Platonic philosophers of classical times. Neo-Platonism was based on the premise of an original creator god who emanates divinity. Flowing out from the One come gods and goddesses, angels, and then

¹⁰⁴ G.R.S. Mead, ed. *Thrice Greatest Hermes* (1906 repr., New York: Samuel Weiser, 2001), Conclusion.

¹⁰⁵ Mathers did this according to Yeats, *Autobiographies*, 338.

¹⁰⁶ Yeats, ‘Is the Order of the R.R. et A.C. to Remain a Magical Order’, 266.

¹⁰⁷ Westcott, ‘Condition needed for Entry into the Second Order’, 128-9.

¹⁰⁸ Yorke, ‘Foreword’ in Howe, *Magicians of the Golden Dawn*, xv.

material things on the earthly plane. It was the task of the theurgist to learn to climb back up the flow and reunite with the One. As well as being strongly influenced by Plato, these philosophers were closely associated with Hermeticism and Gnosticism and admired the wisdom of ancient Egypt. Their most sacred book was the Chaldean Oracles, which was probably compiled in the second century CE. Mathers used the surviving fragments of the Chaldean Oracles in the compilation of the Order's rituals and the fragments were collected to constitute volume six of the *Collectanea Hermetica*. Theurgy was popular with late pagan philosophers, often because they saw it as a barrier against the rise of Christianity since it was something above philosophy and gave direct access to the gods.¹¹⁰ In essence, it was a method that transcended the boundary between man and God.

Also of importance in this context is the Abramelin manuscript, which Mathers found in the Bibiliotheque de l'Arsenal in Paris and later published in 1898.¹¹¹ Mathers wrote that 'to the sincere and earnest student of Occultism this work cannot fail to be a value' and John Symonds has argued that its system of magic was the 'philosophy and driving force' of the Golden Dawn.¹¹² Abramelin is described as an Egyptian Mage and the manuscript lists hundreds of spirits to be evoked and talismans to be used. Its system of magic rested on the need for the aspirant to first establish communication with his guardian angel. This is very close to theurgy and its influence on the Order similarly reflects a desire to do without an intermediary. However, despite Mathers's reverence for the text it should be highlighted that the Golden Dawn took the idea further and made the actual magician the force that it invoked.

Therefore, the Golden Dawn can be seen to be working along highly pagan lines. Gunther Thomann has argued, 'the Order created a Hellenized neoplatonic form of pagan religion of the last centuries of the Roman Empire'.¹¹³ Raine has asserted that though there is probably little similarity between the rites practiced in ancient Egypt and those in

¹⁰⁹ Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, 82-3.

¹¹⁰ Francis X. King, *Magic: The Western Tradition* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), 10.

¹¹¹ The full title of the manuscript is 'The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage, as delivered by Abraham the Jew unto his son Lamech, A.D. 1458'.

¹¹² Mathers, *Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage*, xxii; John Symonds 'Introduction' in Crowley, *Confessions*, 18.

¹¹³ Thomann, *The Revival of Hellenist Religion* (London: 1998), 11.

the Golden Dawn, there is 'a certain continuity of intent'.¹¹⁴ The Golden Dawn's emphasis on spiritual growth through the working of divinities to wield divine powers for themselves was certainly not Christian in sentiment or method. Yorke has distinguished between the two methods by explaining that the Golden Dawn way was to 'inflamm themselves with prayer until they become Adonai the Lord...whereas the Christian approached God the Father through Christ (Adonai) but never tried to become Christ, only to become as Christ'.¹¹⁵ The adoption of this pagan method can be seen in Allan Bennett's address when he invoked the Spirit of Osiris Triumphant and the archangel Michael to consecrate a talisman to protect Robert Felkin from obsession. Bennett called,

I travel upon High, I tread upon the Firmament. I raise a Flame with the Flashing Lightning of Mine Eye. I fly forward in the splendour of the Daily Glorified Ra. Thou art Myself, Mine Image, My Shadow. I have fashioned Thy Form. I have fashioned Thy Soul. I have made Thee a Creature of My Thought.¹¹⁶

A further example is Mathers's ritual, based on Goodwin's fragment, to increase knowledge of one's Higher Genius. Here the adept cried, 'I am He, the Bornless Spirit...I am the Grace of the World' and finally, 'all Spirits of heaven, earth, air and water and every spell and scourge of God are obedient unto me'.¹¹⁷

However, despite this emphasis on pagan method, paganism was not exclusive. Yorke has argued, 'the Golden Dawn is primarily Hermetic not Christian, since it is reverting to pre-Christian methods and attitudes, but some members will have done it all in a more Christian way'. Thus he asserted that Christians in the order did not necessarily relinquish their Christian roots in the employment of Golden Dawn magic.¹¹⁸ Indeed, speaking for those of a more Rosicrucian persuasion, Westcott quite frankly stated, 'Rosicrucians are nothing if not Christian'.¹¹⁹ This brings us back to the fact, already stated, that the Order was a magical rather than a religious order. To conclude that the

¹¹⁴ Kathleen Raine, 'Introduction' to William Wynn Westcott, ed. *The Chaldean Oracles of Zoroaster* (Collectanea Hermetica, VI; repr., Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1995), 8.

¹¹⁵ Gerald Yorke in a private letter cited in Raine, *Yeats the Initiate*, 183-5.

¹¹⁶ In Yorke, 'Foreword' in Howe, *Magicians of the Golden Dawn*, xv.

¹¹⁷ Papyrus XLVI in the British Museum, cited in *Ibid.* Also note, Goodwin's introduction to the fragment linked it to theurgy and he quoted from Iamblicus to illustrate that it may be traceable to ancient Egyptian rituals.

¹¹⁸ In Raine, *Yeats the Initiate*, 183-5.

¹¹⁹ William Wynn Westcott, *Rosicrucian Thoughts on the Ever-Burning Lamps of the Ancients* (London: George Kenning, 1885), 3.

Order must be either pagan or Christian misses the point that some magicians could (or at least felt it appropriate that they could) use degrees of pagan method within a Christian world-view. Nevertheless, although paganism in the Golden Dawn was not absolute, much of its magical methods and aims were extremely entrenched in pagan thought and tended to be more aligned with pagan ideas of the power of man rather than the Christian emphasis on his humility and vulnerability.

All was not plain sailing for the Golden Dawn; it became increasingly rife with dissatisfaction, anxieties and personal differences. At the beginning of the twentieth century it split up into several smaller groups. The Isis-Urania Temple was continued by Ayton and Waite, Felkin led the Stella Matutina, J.W. Brodie-Innes and Mathers began the Alpha et Omega, and Crowley set up the Astrum Argentum. The reasons for the break-up are numerous and space precludes a detailed examination of the causes, which in any case have been fully detailed elsewhere.¹²⁰ However, for our present purposes it is necessary to highlight the disagreements over the influence of paganism in the Order. Indeed, the splinter groups that resulted were different in emphasis: Waite and Ayton's temple concentrated on Christian mysticism, while Crowley's and Mathers's groups had a more pagan bias.

Waite and Ayton had longed for more Christianity within the Golden Dawn. Waite came to have little respect for its leaders and followers, describing Mathers as 'a comic Blackstone of occult lore' and Westcott as 'a dull owl, hooting dolefully among the cypresses over tombs of false adepts'.¹²¹ Ayton increasingly doubted the safety of the Golden Dawn's use of pagan deities, writing that 'even the Olympic Planetary Spirits turn against us in the end'.¹²² Others came likewise to be increasingly spooked by the pagan element. For example, since childhood Maud Gonne had visions of a dark woman. Yeats and Mathers developed a theory that she was the 'Ka', a part of her personality that had survived death in a former incarnation, and this Ka was said to be from a Priestess in an Egyptian Temple. Gonne at first used the woman to help her in magic but later became

¹²⁰ See works listed in Footnote 2.

¹²¹ Waite, *Shadows of Life*, 124.

¹²² King, *Ritual Magic*, 94-5.

increasingly fearful of it and came to see it as an evil force.¹²³ Annie Horniman was also unsettled by an Egyptian emphasis. She encountered Farr's Egyptian adept in the British Museum and wrote that the experience made her feel threatened: 'at that time it gave me a sense of ruthless destruction and a sweeping away of obstacles and a disregard of the weak and helpless'.¹²⁴ Horniman went on to become a main oppositional force against Farr and her Sphere Group. She employed the help of Yeats who similarly sought to discredit Farr's Egyptian spirit, asserting that the guidance of a spirit found by accident in statue could never be as good as an Order which reaches up to God and has angels among its members.¹²⁵

Waite and Ayton found the answers to their disappointment in the Golden Dawn through a stepped up emphasis on Christian Mysticism. Gonne discovered the Golden Dawn to be closely related to Freemasonry and, because she thought it the political ally of the British Empire and opposed to her native Ireland, she withdrew from the Order.¹²⁶ Yeats looked increasingly to Irish mysticism. However, others turned increasingly to paganism to satisfy their longings. We have already seen Farr's use of Egyptian magic in the years after her time as a member of the Golden Dawn, but by far the two most prominent examples are the two foremost magicians of our period, Mathers and Crowley. In their own ways they increasingly used pagan wisdom, pagan deities and pagan systems in an attempt to achieve that initial goal of the Golden Dawn – 'the Summum Bonum, True Wisdom and Perfect Happiness'. Indeed, the influence of Egyptian magic and mystery religions upon the magic of our period is perhaps most obvious in the rituals they went on to create after their association with the Order. Let us examine then the work and ideas of Mathers and Crowley, and the ways in which they used paganism.

Although Mathers played a vital part in the formation of the Golden Dawn, in 1896 he turned his attention primarily to his longstanding interest in the Egyptian Mysteries and later took to signing himself 'Head of the Order of the R.R. et AC, of the Golden Dawn, and of the Egyptian Mysteries'.¹²⁷ Thus he still remained Head of the

¹²³ Maud Gonne, *A Servant of the Queen* (London: Gollancz, 1938; repr., Dublin: Golden Eagle Books, 1950), 244-5.

¹²⁴ In Greer, *Women of the Golden Dawn*, 253.

¹²⁵ Yeats, 'Is the Order of the R.R. et A.C. to Remain a Magical Order', 266.

¹²⁶ Gonne, *Servant of the Queen*, 249.

¹²⁷ Letter to the Golden Dawn July 1902, in Gilbert, *Revelations of the Golden Dawn*, 110-11.

Golden Dawn and one cannot necessarily argue that he became dissatisfied with that which he created and governed, but a passion for Egyptian paganism increasingly came to command his attention. The Mathers devoted themselves to writing and performing ceremonies based on Egyptian models and calling upon Egyptian deities, primarily Isis. Mathers described to Frederic Lees, who published an article about their worship of Isis in the New York based magazine, *The Humanitarian*, that they came to revive the ancient religion because ‘during our studies of Egyptian religion we obtained certain lost truths, in possession of which we became converts to Isis’.¹²⁸ There is an unverified account, which a reporter for the *Sunday Chronicle* referred to, that the Mathers ‘converted to the strange and passionate mysticism of the worship of Isis during their travels in Egypt’.¹²⁹ There is little evidence to suggest that this is correct, and travel is especially unlikely given that the Mathers continually struggled for money. Whatever the exact details, the fact remains that, at this time, the Mathers, as Moina described to Yeats, were ‘plunged in “Egypt”’.¹³⁰

Yeats recorded that Moina was so devoted to Isis she kept a statue of Isis in the corner of her drawing room.¹³¹ Greater still, the Mathers established an underground chapel to Isis in their home. Lees described the temple in their home thus:

Through the yellow muslin curtains of a window on my right streamed the dim light of a mid-October morning. The winged figure of Isis was facing me, her horned disk circled with an aureola of diffused light, which came through the interstices of the closed shutters of another window behind. A profusion of flowers was at her feet, and on each side of her were lotus flowers – the symbol of resurrection. My thoughts were carried back thousands of years B.C. – I saw that I was in a little temple of the goddess Isis. On all sides were evidences of the religion of the ancient Egyptians; here near the altar, cartoons of Osiris and Nephthys, Horus and Harpocrates; there, in front of it, a triangular-shaped lamp of green stone, whence sprang a little tongue of white flame never extinguished. The heavy odour of incense, telling of a recent ceremony, mingled with the perfume of the flowers.¹³²

It was here that the Mathers carried out their rites of Isis, first privately and then semi-publicly. Their home was in Paris at this time, due to a command Mathers had received

¹²⁸ Frederic Lees, ‘Isis worship in Paris: Conversations with the Heirophant Rameses and the High Priestess Anari’ in *The Humanitarian*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (February, 1900). Viewed at <http://golden-dawn.com/temple/index?s=articles&p=isis_worship_in_paris> June 2006.

¹²⁹ *Sunday Chronicle* (19 March, 1899).

¹³⁰ Letter dated 29 May 1899, in *Letters to Yeats*, 2 vols, eds. R.J. Finneran, G.M. Harper, W.M. Murphy (London: MacMillan, 1977), I. 50-1.

¹³¹ Written in a rejected Epilogue to *A Vision* addressed ‘To Vestigia’. Printed in *A Critical Edition to Yeats’s ‘A Vision’*, eds. George Mills Harper and Walter Kelly Hood (London: MacMillan, 1978).

from the Secret Chiefs to set up the Ahathoor Temple in Paris, and so it was Paris that became the place of their pagan worship. Mathers may also have found this an appropriate place to begin the Isis movement due to his belief that the founders of Paris had worshipped Isis and named the city after her. He carried out extensive research into this theory and came to argue that the coat of arms of the city of Paris pictured the boat of Isis.¹³³

In 1898 Moina Mathers wrote that they were endeavouring to restore the Egyptian mysteries with some Frenchmen.¹³⁴ There has been some speculation that this may have involved the famous French occultist M. Gerard Encausse (who published under the name 'Papus'), because he had been made a member of the Ahathoor temple in 1895. However, Howe has suggested this was likely to have been just in an honorary capacity,¹³⁵ and so the reference is probably instead primarily to Jules Bois. Bois was a good friend of the Mathers and had previously re-introduced Mathers to the Abramelin manuscript.¹³⁶ His role in the Mathers's Isis worship was pivotal since it was he who persuaded them to extend their private worship to a public arena. The Mathers explained to Lees that at first they were unsure about making this step but Isis herself appeared to Moina and sanctioned any efforts they might make.¹³⁷ The Mathers first publicly performed their rites of Isis at the Bodiniere Theatre. Bois began the performance with an introduction of the legend of Isis and her worship, and the Mathers followed with the celebration of the rites of Isis in the form of a theatrical performance.

The public nature of these performances led to several magazine and newspaper articles, most notably the article by Lees and two articles by André Gaucher published in *L'Echo du Merveilleux* (1900). These now serve as one of our main sources of what

¹³² Lees, 'Isis worship in Paris'.

¹³³ André Gaucher, 'Isis à Montmartre' in *L'Echo de merveilleux* (Paris, December 1 and 15, 1900). Viewed at <<http://www.golden-dawn.com/temple/index.jsp?l=fren&p=ahathoor>> June 2006. See also Ithell Colquhoun, *Sword of Wisdom: MacGregor Mathers and the Golden Dawn* (London: Neville Spearman, 1975), 87. Ideas about the connection between Isis and Paris were not confined to Mathers. In wider Parisian society there was speculation that Notre Dame Cathedral had been built on the ruins of a temple of Isis and under Napoleon Isis became the tutelary goddess of Paris. See Hornung, *Secret Lore of Egypt*, 133.

¹³⁴ Letter to Yeats dated 31 October 1898, in *Letters to Yeats*, I. 42-3.

¹³⁵ Howe, *Magicians of the Golden Dawn*, 295.

¹³⁶ Mathers stated he had first been made aware of the manuscript by 'a celebrated occultist, since dead' (which is likely to be a reference to A.F.A. Woodward) who had told him *Zanoni* was based on Abramelin magic. Mathers, *Sacred Magic of Abramelin*, xvi.

happened during the rites. Lees offers the fullest description of the way in which the mass was celebrated at the Bodiniere Theatre performances:

The Hierophant Ramses [Mathers], holding in one hand the sistrum, which every now and then he shook, and in the other a spray of lotus, said prayers before this altar, after which the High Priestess Anari [Moina] invoked the goddess in penetrating and passionate tones'. Then followed the "dance of the four elements" by a young Parisian lady, who, dressed in long white robes, had previously recited some verses in French in honour of Isis...Most of the ladies present in the fashionable Parisian audience brought offerings of flowers, whilst the gentlemen threw wheat on to the altar. The ceremony was artistic in the extreme.¹³⁸

Lees placed emphasis on the costumes worn by the Mathers, which he described as supremely beautiful and full of symbology. He also stressed, as is important to point out, the prominent role of Moina Mathers in the rites. The reporter for the *Sunday Chronicle* also noted her crucial role, although was less favourable about the power of the rites overall: 'she invoked Isis with such passion and force in both voice and gesture that she quite saved the situation and assured the success of a performance which otherwise might have turned into the ridiculous'.¹³⁹

The Mathers performed in the Bodiniere Theatre on several occasions and performed rites frequently in their underground chapel, both to a public and a more private audience. In his articles, the French journalist, Gaucher, placed emphasis on the existence of two types of ceremonies – one open to laymen, and the other only for the initiated. Despite being uninitiated, Gaucher managed to secure an invitation from Mathers to the more secret rites. Gaucher described that a car picked him up from his apartment and drove him to the site of the ceremony blindfolded. The ceremony apparently began with simple rites to Isis and then progressed onto the calling of Osiris. Gaucher experienced the ceremony with a curiosity and amazement which quickly turned to fear, as the assistants and audience either fell to the floor in ecstatic convulsions or stood upright and rigid with the blood drained from their faces. The climax, as Gaucher describes it, was the coming to life of the statue of Osiris and the appearance of a host of Egyptian gods. The experience caused Gaucher to faint and he awoke to find that he had been driven safely home.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Lees, 'Isis worship in Paris'.

¹³⁸ Lees, 'Isis Worship in Paris'.

¹³⁹ *Sunday Chronicle* (19 March, 1899).

¹⁴⁰ Gaucher, 'Isis à Montmartre'.

Gaucher's account seems to indicate that Mathers was attempting to revive an ancient Egyptian magical practice which involved the animation of statues of the gods. Further evidence of this can be seen in Lees's account, in which he wrote that Mathers told him, 'we believe as our predecessors did...that divine force can be made to appear in statues'.¹⁴¹ The animation of statues was perhaps what was perceived as happening in the initiation into ancient Egyptian mystery religions when the initiate supposedly came face to face with gods and goddesses. This was not a new concept in nineteenth century magic. Lytton described the animation of a statue to Isis in *Last Days of Pompeii*, which bares similarities to Gaucher's account: 'around the head played and darted coruscations of livid lightening; the eyes became like balls of lurid fire, and seemed fixed in withering and intolerable wrath'.¹⁴² In addition, in 1886 Blavatsky published an article entitled 'Animated Statues' in which she discussed ancient Egyptian ideas.¹⁴³ The indication that Mathers may well have been engaging in such practices suggests that Mathers sought not just to impose Egyptian myth upon the current ritual structure, but to actually rediscover Egyptian ritual. Indeed, Mathers stressed to Lees that he was concerned with the rediscovery of the absolutely pure form of ancient Isis worship.¹⁴⁴

What Isis worship meant in terms of the Mathers's religion was a belief in pantheism; as Mathers explained to Lees, 'that each force of the universe is regulated by a god. Gods are, therefore, innumerable and infinite'. Mathers also emphasised to Lees that their religion had the same objective as any other; that is, to be a moral guide and a great agency for good in the world.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, although the rites of Isis were a more public affair and amounted more to a mystery religion than a magical Order, it was justified along the same lines as the Golden Dawn. In October 1898, Moina Mathers wrote to Yeats highlighting that through the Egyptian Mysteries 'at last one sees the practicability and possibility of all the things we have so desired'.¹⁴⁶ The interest of many Parisians appeared to prove to them that the Isis movement was capable of expansion. Mathers told Lees that a temple was being built in Paris due to the increasing number of

¹⁴¹ Lees, 'Isis Worship in Paris'.

¹⁴² Lytton, *Last Days*, 145.

¹⁴³ H.P. Blavatsky, 'Animated Statues' in *The Theosophist Vol. 8* (November, 1886); repr. in Blavatsky, *Ancient Egyptian Magic*, 19-28.

¹⁴⁴ Lees, 'Isis Worship in Paris'.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*.

participants which they could no longer accommodate in their home and told Gaucher that several wealthy individuals had expressed an interest in sponsoring the Egyptian Mysteries.¹⁴⁷ In 1900 Mathers was called upon to arrange a Temple of Isis for the Paris Exhibition. As well as enjoying the kudos of being asked, Mathers probably also hoped to raise the profile of his movement and attract wealthy investors. Although many have been critical that Mathers's knowledge was shallow and superficial, by some at least, he must have been considered a notable Egyptologist. Indeed, one famous Egyptologist is allegedly reported to have said, 'MacGregor is a Pharaoh come back. All my life I have studied the dry bones; he has made them live'.¹⁴⁸ Thus it can be seen that Mathers increasingly devoted his time and energy to all things Egyptian, seeing in Egyptian magic and mystery religions the way to achieve his magical aims.

Paganism also became the main source of Crowley's magical beliefs and practices. The son of a member of the Plymouth Brethren, Crowley's early experience of an ardent Christian faith turned him as a boy against everything Christian. He was similarly disgusted by the modern situation of England, as he later reflected, writing that England was a 'hausfrau's idea of heaven and the empire an eternal Earl's Court exhibition...the soul of England was stagnant and stupefied'.¹⁴⁹ He was introduced to the Golden Dawn by George Cecil Jones and began his magical career in November 1898 with his initiation into the Order. Crowley progressed quickly through the ranks but was forbidden entry into the Second Order due to rumours that he was engaging in homosexual acts. Mathers, who at the time was close to Crowley and respected him as an able magician, went against the orders of the other chiefs and initiated him into the Second Order in Paris. He then sent Crowley back to England as his personal envoy to seize control of the Order. Crowley's initiation and return to London caused considerable uproar and contributed to the fragmentation of the Golden Dawn.

Although Crowley later became estranged from Mathers, he was greatly influenced by him. In 1899 he stayed with the Mathers in Paris during which time he took

¹⁴⁶ Letter dated 31 October 1898, in *Letters to Yeats*, I. 42-3.

¹⁴⁷ Lees, 'Isis Worship in Paris'; Gaucher, 'Isis à Montmartre'.

¹⁴⁸ Reported by J.W. Brodie-Innes, 'MacGregor Mathers: Some Personal Reminiscences' in *The Occult Review*, Vol. 29 (May, 1919), 284-6, 285.

¹⁴⁹ Crowley, *Confessions*, 217.

to signing himself 'Aleister MacGregor'.¹⁵⁰ In his 'autohagiography' he wrote that at that time 'his gods were those of Egypt, interpreted on lines closely akin to those of Greece'.¹⁵¹ He was also influenced by the Isis movement and it is highly likely that he partook in the rites. He dedicated *Carmen Saeculare* (1901) to 'on earth...to the Countess of Glenstrae: In heaven my vision to the High Priestess of Lady Isis'; this obviously being Moina Mathers.¹⁵² He wrote a triumphant song to Isis during his stay with the Mathers, with the climax, 'Hail unto Isis! For she is the Lady of Life'.¹⁵³ This song was later used by Crowley's friend Charles Stanfield Jones in his rites of Isis which was performed in Vancouver on 27th November 1914. Earlier drafts of this rite which bear Crowley's handwriting reveal that it is likely Crowley exerted an influence over, or at the very least endorsed, Jones's entire rite.¹⁵⁴

When Crowley separated from Mathers he set up the *A.A.*, his own splinter group away from the Golden Dawn. The prominence of paganism in Crowley's ideas here can be seen in the importance he attached to Pan. In writing the 'Holy Books' for the *A.A.* in 1907 he described how he felt:

the perfume of Pan pervading, the taste of him utterly filling my mouth, so that the tongue breaks forth into a weird and monstrous speech. The embrace of him intense on every centre of pain and pleasure. The sixth interior sense aflame with the inmost self of Him...Pan! Pan! Io Pan! Io Pan!¹⁵⁵

This was not the only book which Crowley believed he wrote under the auspices of Pan. In *The World's Tragedy* (1910) he described in the Preface that he 'gazed upon the moon and vowed myself a knight of Artemis, to bring truth into this England of hypocrisy, light in its superstition of rationalism, love in its prudery, chastity into its whoredom!' On returning home he wrote that Pan appeared to him and abode in him, so that 'all my other work I count as nothing; for I have written this in Pan, and in Pan I am content'.¹⁵⁶ Thus

¹⁵⁰ See 'A.C.'s letters: 1899-1900', Yorke Collection, I.1.1, NS4.

¹⁵¹ Crowley, *Confessions*, 357.

¹⁵² Aleister Crowley, *Carmen Saeculare* (London: [Privately issued], 1901).

¹⁵³ Crowley, *Confessions*, 560.

¹⁵⁴ Charles Stanfield Jones, 'A Rite of Isis', Yorke Collection, NS93 and OSF5b.

¹⁵⁵ Repr. in Francis X. King, *The Magical World of Aleister Crowley* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1977), 41.

¹⁵⁶ Aleister Crowley, *The World's Tragedy* (Paris: 1910; repr., Arizona: Falcon Press, 1985), xxiii.

central to Crowley's ideas was the perception of an all-pervading Pan and a Pan who stood in direct contradistinction to modern England.

Pan also played a primary role in Crowley's desert exploits. In 1909, Crowley and his apprentice Victor Neuberg went to Algiers to explore and practice the Enochian system of magic developed by John Dee.¹⁵⁷ At the heart of the Enochian system lies eighteen calls to invoke Angels of various magical squares, with a further call to invoke one or other of thirty Aires which were believed to open new dimensions of consciousness. When in the fourteenth Aire, Crowley was instructed to perform an offering to Pan, which resulted in him being sodomized by Neuberg. This probably took the form of a classical invocation where the young apprentice called down or invoked Pan and became inflamed by the power of the god. This highlights not only Crowley's eclectic syncretism but also his reverence for Pan as a diabolic god of lust and magic. Indeed, for Crowley and Neuberg, Pan became a powerful signifier of sexualised magic. Neuberg's poem, *The Triumph of Pan* (1910), looks forward to a time when, 'men shall stand naked, unashamed and free/ to flaunt abroad their new-born ecstasy...raise high the Paeon of the God in Man!/ Io Triumphe! Hail to the new-born Pan!'¹⁵⁸ Crowley's 'Hymn to Pan' (1913) called Pan 'to me, to me' until he cried 'I am Pan! Io Pan! Io Pan Pan! Pan!...I rave and I rape and I rip and I rend'.¹⁵⁹ During the desert episode Crowley had Neuberg shave his head save for two tufts at the temples which were shaped into horns.¹⁶⁰ Neuberg's biographer, Jean Overton Fuller, has argued that on their split in the Autumn of 1914 Crowley cursed Neuberg as the lower side of Pan.¹⁶¹

For seven weeks in October and November of 1911, Crowley, along with the help of Neuberg as a dancer and his then lover Leila Wadell as a musician, publicly celebrated the 'Rites of Eleusis' in Caxton Hall, London. These rites bore resemblances to Mathers's Rites of Isis, not least for their theatrical public performance, but focus was instead primarily on Greco-Roman gods. In a prospectus for the ceremony Crowley declared his

¹⁵⁷ For a full examination of Crowley and Neuberg's expedition see Alex Owen, 'The Sorcerer and His Apprentice' in *Journal of British Studies* (1997), 99-133.

¹⁵⁸ Victor Neuberg, *The Triumph of Pan* (1910; repr., London: Skoob Books, 1989), 19.

¹⁵⁹ Aleister Crowley, 'Hymn to Pan', Yorke Collection, NS45; repr., Crowley, *Magick Without Tears*, eds. John Symonds and Kenneth Grant (London: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1973), 125-7.

¹⁶⁰ Crowley, *Confessions*, 626.

¹⁶¹ Jean Overton Fuller, *The Magical Dilemma of Victor Neuberg* (London: W.H. Allen, 1965; repr., Oxford: Mandrake, 1990), 213-14.

intention for enacting the rites, 'We are the poets! We are the children of the wood and stream, of mist and mountain, of sun and wind! We are the Greeks! And to us the rites of Eleusis should open the doors to Heaven and we shall enter in and see God face to face.'¹⁶² He went on to tell reporters for *The Sketch* (also reproduced in his prospectus) that all the gods are

barren of hope until the spirit of the Infinite All, great Pan, tears asunder the veil and displays the hope of humanity, the Crowned Child of the Future. All this is symbolised in the holy rites which we have recovered from the darkness of history, and now in the fullness of time disclose that the world may be redeemed.

Thus he proclaimed that his adepts shall 'dance in the moonlight before Dionysus, and delight under the stars with Aphrodite; yet they shall also dwell beyond all these things in the unchanged Heaven – Here and Now.'¹⁶³ Over the seven weeks a rite of a different god was celebrated; these were Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sol, Venus, Mercury and Luna. Within these rites other gods were prominent, for example, Isis was central to the rite of Venus, and Pan to the rite of Luna. Interestingly, the rituals made use of some nineteenth century poetry, most prominently that of Swinburne, which featured in nearly all of the rites.¹⁶⁴

Crowley also called upon Greco-Roman pagan deities to achieve his magical aims in the homosexual workings known as the Paris Workings. These he undertook with Neuberg in 1913-14. As one example of what occurred, on 20th January 1914 the classical deities spoke to Crowley through Neuberg stating that they 'wished to regain their dominion of earth and that the two brethren...were as fiery arrows shot by Olympians in their war with slave gods such as Christ, Buddha and Allah'.¹⁶⁵ Previous to this, in 1913, Crowley had published an article in *The Equinox* entitled 'Energized Enthusiasm', which posited the close connection between sexuality and genius. Crowley argued that while Protestantism is 'the excrement of human thought' because it denies the link, the Greeks had supremely understood it. He argued that the Greek method had been to attain genius through the invocation of Bacchus, Aphrodite and Apollo who

¹⁶² Aleister Crowley, *The Rites of Eleusis* (London: Equinox, 1911), 1.

¹⁶³ Account published in *The Sketch* (24 August 1910); repr., Crowley, *Rites of Eleusis*, 5-8, 5.

¹⁶⁴ Crowley's reverence for Swinburne can also be seen in *Confessions*, 165, where he described that he had a 'passionate dedication' to the poet.

¹⁶⁵ John Symonds, *The Great Beast* (London: MacDonald, 1972), 157-9.

represented wine, women and song. These ancient rites, he concluded, must be restored.¹⁶⁶ Thus repelled by Christianity, Crowley looked to pre-Christian deities, methods and practices in order to achieve his aim of uncovering the latent powers in man.

Although Crowley drank heartily from the font of ancient Greek paganism, he was even more attracted to the deities, mystery religions and magical ideas of ancient Egypt. He spent much time in Egypt and it was in 1904 while in Cairo with his then wife Rose Kelly that he received messages from Egyptian gods, which were to drastically affect his later teachings. Crowley detailed the sequence of events in his autohagiography. The story goes that Rose, who had no idea of magic whatsoever, became in a trance-like state and instructed Crowley on how to invoke Horus. On 21st March Crowley successfully invoked Horus, and as a prologue of what would follow, a voice announced that 'the Equinox of the Gods' had come and that a new epoch had begun. Rose, in another trance at the beginning of April, notified Crowley that at noon on April 8th, 9th, and 10th he had to enter the room where he performed his ceremonies to Horus and write down exactly what he heard until one o'clock. Crowley followed his wife's order and his (in)famous *The Book of the Law* or *Liber Al* was born; being dictated to Crowley by a superhuman entity 'Aiwass'.¹⁶⁷ In addition, through this sequence of events, Crowley came to identify himself with an ancient priest of Horus, Ankh-f-n-Khonsu. This was because he tested Rose by taking her to the Boulak Museum in Cairo and asking her to point out the Horus with whom she believed she was in touch. The picture she pointed to depicted Horus receiving a sacrifice from this priest. Crowley saw Rose's identification as particularly significant since the picture bore the museum catalogue number, 666, the Biblical sign of the Beast with which Crowley felt a great affinity apparently since childhood.¹⁶⁸

Liber Al was received as a revelation from three deities in ancient Egyptian form: the star-goddess Nuit, the earth god Hadit, and the war god Ra-Hoor-Khuit. It proclaimed that the old world of Christianity had collapsed and that a new Aeon for mankind had

¹⁶⁶ Aleister Crowley, 'Energized Enthusiasm' in *The Equinox*, Vol. 1 No. 9 (1913).

¹⁶⁷ Crowley, *Confessions*, 393-5.

¹⁶⁸ Crowley stressed that one is not to generally believe that they are reincarnations of the ancient Egyptians. He argued that the identification with this priest was imposed on him by the *Book of the Law* and that he did not feel particularly flattered or comforted by this identification. In Chapter XL: 'Are we reincarnations of the ancient Egyptians?' in *Magick*.

begun. Crowley wrote that Egyptian theology foresaw this progress of humanity and symbolised it in the triad of Isis, Osiris and Horus. The Aeon of Isis represented the ancient pre-Christian religion where the Mother-Goddess or female principle reigned. The Aeon of Osiris represented the historical evolution to emphasis on the patriarchal father figure. The new Aeon of Horus represented an androgynous figure, the child. This Aeon was to come to abolish the imbalance between the two opposite male and female principles and give rise to a new religion, bringing forth unity in humans and in the world. The child represented 'complete moral independence and innocence'.¹⁶⁹ This new morality was called the law of 'Thelema', the Hellenic word for 'Will', and its law was based on the maxim 'do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law'. However, in order to affect moral independence, the child-god has to invoke violence, destruction and war. Indeed, it proclaimed itself a 'god of War and of Vengeance' and threatened to 'deal hardly' with patriarchal religions. At perhaps its most gratuitous, the child-god expressed its hatred:

With my Hawk's head I peck at the eyes of Jesus as he hangs upon the cross. I flap my wings in the face of Mohammad and blind him. With my claws I tear out the flesh of the Indian and the Buddhist, Mongol and Din.¹⁷⁰

In this vision Crowley also placed emphasis on the Egyptian god of evil and destruction, Set. Thus pagan and Egyptian ideas were at the centre of Crowley's *Liber Al*. He perceived Egyptian deities as timeless representations of the movements of the world and argued that through the twin pillars of Egyptology and psychology man could come to 'understand what is implied, and what effect to expect, in the world of thought and action'.¹⁷¹

In order to draw accurate conclusions about what these magicians were getting out of paganism, we also need to view them as Victorian and Edwardian men and women. Crowley's statement of 'privilege of membership' to his *Ordo Templis Orienti* (*O.T.O.*), a German order which he was apparently admitted to in 1912 and then took over

¹⁶⁹ Crowley, *Confessions*, 400.

¹⁷⁰ Aleister Crowley, *Liber Al vel Legis III*, 51-3. First published in *The Holy Books of Thelema*, Vol. 3 (London: [Printed for private circulation], 1909). Viewed at <<http://www.sacred-texts.com/oto/engccxx.htm>> June 2006.

as head, provides us with an initial explanation. He offered to ‘destroy all fear by creating absolute certainty in the mind of the power of the innermost self to conquer’ and encouraged members to ‘consider well the law of detachment. This ensures the progress and your fight for that realisation means man’s liberation’.¹⁷² This ‘privilege’ would no doubt have been highly attractive in an age which held strongly to a belief in human progress but in which fear and doubt had far from been erased. Members of the Golden Dawn similarly aspired to greatness in knowledge and wisdom. This is reflected in many of the mottoes they adopted, which were to reflect their magical aspirations as a whole. For example, Mathers chose the motto *‘S Rioghail Mo Dhream* – Royal Is My Tribe; Westcott chose *Nom Omnis Moriar* – I shall not wholly die; Crowley chose *Perdurabo* – I will last through; Percy Bullock chose *Levavi Oculos* – I will lift up mine eyes; Farr chose *Sapientia Sapienti Dono Data* – Wisdom is given to the wise as a gift; and Gardner chose *De Profundis Ad Lucem* – From the depths to the light.¹⁷³

Mathers in particular craved the status and power he did not have in the outside world. He came from a relatively humble upbringing and lived amid great poverty for much of his life. In 1890 he received some respite at the behest of Horniman who persuaded her father to appoint him as curator of the Horniman Museum. The Mathers went on to receive much patronage from Horniman, but when they separated over disagreements about the working of the Golden Dawn, the Mathers fell on hard times again.¹⁷⁴ His grasping at status and superiority can be seen in his interest in the theory of war and his belief that he was a born commander. He adopted the title Count MacGregor of Glenstrae, claiming that he was descended from the House of Stuart. Crowley has claimed that Mathers also believed himself to be James IV of Scotland, who had in fact not been killed at the Battle of Flodden but was instead an immortal adept.¹⁷⁵ Yeats wrote that while he was staying with the Mathers in Paris, Mathers would ‘at night...dress himself in Highland dress, and dance the sword dance, and his mind brooded upon the

¹⁷¹ Crowley, *Confessions*, 399.

¹⁷² ‘The Vow of Holy Obedience’, Yorke Collection, NS91.

¹⁷³ For a fuller list of mottoes see Howe, *Magicians of the Golden Dawn*, Appendix 6.

¹⁷⁴ However Crowley’s assertion that in the 1900s Mathers forced his wife into prostitution (*Confessions*, 372) is certainly more likely to be a gibe at Mathers than a claim based on fact.

¹⁷⁵ Aleister Crowley, *Moonchild* (London: Mandrake Press, 1929), 238. However, due caution should be taken in regard to Crowley’s claim since the book *Moonchild* is full of exaggeration and slander against his former Golden Dawn colleagues.

ramifications of clans and tartans,' though Yeats doubted whether Mathers had even seen the Highlands.¹⁷⁶ Perhaps Mathers's desires are expressed best in Yeats's autobiography when he writes,

Once when I met him in the street in his Highland clothes, with several knives in his stockings, he said, "when I am dressed like this I feel like a walking flame," and I think that everything he did was but an attempt to feel like a walking flame.¹⁷⁷

Mathers's desires as a man would have shaped his magical career. For him, the pagan method of theurgy may have been the most attractive method of magic precisely because it most satisfied his general craving for greatness.

The magicians of our period as a whole gravitated towards a desire for elitism. The very nature of a secret society complete with an initiation process and rigid hierarchy is based in the principle of the rise of only the few to greatness. Westcott spoke out against modern times for its tendency to reduce all men to 'a level, a dead level, of mediocrity, an effort fatal to the supremacy of individuals'. He argued that science is taught parrot fashion, which despite being of some value to society, is not 'the stepping stones on direct road to Deity'.¹⁷⁸ The make-up of the magician was important in such concepts of elitism, for it was believed that birth did not make a magician but rather 'intensity of duly directed effort...in a certain number of persons with specially favourable mental powers'.¹⁷⁹ This emphasis on a combination of natural talent plus a considerable amount of hard work derived from ideas about ancient Egypt. As Farr expounded:

To the ancient Egyptian the most highest man was he who had by hard training gained supremacy over the Elements...one whose Will had risen Phoenix-like from the ashes of his desires; one whose Intuition, cleansed from the stains of material illusion, was a clear mirror in which he could perceived the Past, the Present and the Future.¹⁸⁰

Thus since ancient Egypt was viewed as a society which placed magic at its heart, such elitism was extended outwards into the social arena. Indeed, Farr went on to emphasise that ancient Egyptian religion could infiltrate the social imagination because 'it was an

¹⁷⁶ Yeats, *Autobiographies*, 336.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 338-9.

¹⁷⁸ Westcott, *Rosicrucian Thoughts*, 4.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Farr, *Egyptian Magic*, 1.

applied science with no vague dreamings and this made its religion a real and much more potent force'.¹⁸¹

Bullock argued that the ethical results of Egyptian magic and religion were moral precepts most refined and devoted. He stressed that in Egypt, as it should be in modern society, initiation was open to all who could pass it - it was an 'aristocracy of intelligence'. He linked this type of aristocratic rule to the harmonious and vital national life that Egypt enjoyed.¹⁸² Thus, for Bullock like many other magicians, magical aims could enter the social sphere and become a creative and moral force. However, elsewhere Bullock emphasised that it was not necessary to study occultism in order to become good, but rather to become wise.¹⁸³ As we have seen, the magicians hoped that good would spring from this wisdom, but it is interesting to note that this teleology is the precise opposite to Carpenter's who posited that men must be good to become wise.

While magical paganism may not have been inherently social in its approach, it certainly did come to encroach upon the worldly sphere. By the very fact the magician had to work so hard at his craft, magic could come to consume the individual wholesale. For example, in the Preface to *The Mystery of Time* (1905), Farr emphasised that magic gradually absorbs the very life of the devotee.¹⁸⁴ For both Mathers and Crowley their interest in paganism, which derived from their magical lives, came to assume a social and worldly grounding. Firstly, they used paganism as a tool to inaugurate a new era. Mathers proclaimed that a new age of Isis was arriving, and her divinity would now rule the world. For Crowley, the new era was the Aeon of Horus, and this too was arriving in the world now.¹⁸⁵ Their particular emphasis on the immediacy of the dawn of the new era leads us onto the second point: that they often predicted and interpreted worldly events along these lines. According to Yeats, in 1893 Mathers said that he had begun to see changes in the world and linked this to the pagan mysteries.¹⁸⁶ Both Crowley and

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁸² Bullock, *Egyptian Belief*, 20-1.

¹⁸³ Percy Bullock, 'Flying Roll 27: Principles of Theurgia or Higher Magic by L.O.' (1892-5), Yorke Collection, NS57.

¹⁸⁴ Florence Farr, *The Mystery of Time* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1905), 1.

¹⁸⁵ Even before *Liber Al* Crowley had written of his belief in a fast arriving new era in *Carmen Seculare* (1901), in which he proclaimed, 'The Reign of Darkness hath an end. Behold!...The scared lotus of the universe/ Blossoms this century'.

¹⁸⁶ Yeats, *Autobiographies*, 225.

Mathers also predicted wars, which they perceived in the light of their pagan thought. However, it should be noted that when considering the Great War, Crowley wrote that Neuberg was interpreting it as 'the Overture of the Reign of Horus' but that he had not yet made up his mind.¹⁸⁷

Thirdly, the magicians saw themselves at the helm of these cataclysmic changes. Crowley saw himself as a prophet of his age, aiming to 'restore paganism in its purest form'.¹⁸⁸ He drew on pagan ideas to declare his law of Thelema, this implying, he argued, 'not merely a new religion, but a new cosmology, a new philosophy, a new ethics'.¹⁸⁹ Although Crowley did not make great use of the *Liber Al* at first, later on it became absolutely central to his work and led to the setting up of an Abbey of Thelema at Cefalu, Sicily in 1920. The law of Thelema ruled as an attempt to return to the lost Eden of wholeness and completion. Again, this shows the application of paganism in the social, albeit somewhat social utopian, arena. Mathers similarly gave himself a pivotal role. He linked Isis worship to Scotland, claiming, 'long before the Christian era...one of the Pharaoh's daughters, the Queen Scota, brought to Scotland the altars of the Goddess [Isis]...and the tradition has been handed down until our time. I am the last link of this chain'.¹⁹⁰ Gerald Heym, a French alchemist and friend of the Mathers while in Paris, has argued that through the Mathers's contact with the wisdom of the ancient Egyptian priesthood, they were given a plan for the regeneration of Europe on esoteric lines.¹⁹¹ Yeats perceived a link between Mathers's interest in Egypt and his concerns as a would-be commander. He wrote that Mathers was 'a Jacobite who believed in the overthrow of Victoria and the restoration of the Stuarts and imagined a Napoleonic role for himself, a Europe transformed according to his Egypt restored'.¹⁹² Similarly Gonne wrote that she believed Mathers had 'a throne-pretender for Scotland up his sleeve' but could not remember whether this was on the terrestrial or astral plane.¹⁹³ Such blurring of ideas highlights the prominent connection that Mathers made between the magical and the mundane worlds.

¹⁸⁷ Letter to G.M. Cowie 16 August 1914, Yorke Collection, NS4.

¹⁸⁸ Crowley, *Confessions*, 839.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 399.

¹⁹⁰ Gaucher, 'Isis à Montmartre', trans. in Greer, *Women of the Golden Dawn*, 248.

¹⁹¹ In Colquhoun, *Sword of Wisdom*, 93.

¹⁹² Yeats, *Autobiographies*, 337.

Through Mathers's concern with Scotland we can perhaps discern a further reason for the link between magical practices and the wider world. As I have highlighted, emphasis on the immediacy of the dawn of a new era allowed such ideas to be seen increasingly as a reality. Emphasis on the location for the application of pagan ideas encouraged tangibility evermore, as well as aligning it with patriotism. Mathers's interest in (what he believed to be) his native Scotland was linked to the wider Celtic revival apparent during the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Yeats was a leading player in this revival, concerned with his native Ireland. He sought to unite Irish Christianity to a more ancient world. Central to this aim was a belief in Ireland as a mystical land crowded with deities; moreover, it was a belief that it could be possible to communicate with these deities.¹⁹⁴ In the late 1890s, together with Gonne, Yeats planned a new mystical Order, called the 'Castle of Heroes', inspired by a castle on an island that he hoped to buy or hire for the purpose.¹⁹⁵ He hoped to attract men and women who would study the teachings of the Theosophical Society and the Golden Dawn, together with Irish lore, in order to work out the rituals required to revive the Irish deities. To create the Order's structure and rites Yeats enlisted the help of Mathers, as well as himself concentrating on symbols and working out parallels between Greco-Roman and Irish deities. He wanted the centre of the Order's myth to be based on the lore of the Druids and early Irish Christianity, which he believed was a version brought to Ireland via Christian Egypt and so retained characteristics of the older pagan faiths.¹⁹⁶ His dream was that his Order would bring forth an Ireland 'as much a unity in thought and feeling as ancient Greece and Rome and Egypt'.¹⁹⁷ He looked to the Eleusian mysteries in particular because he believed that they had raised the moral tenor of ancient Greece and become its religious centre. He hoped that his Order would be a similar rallying point for Irish religion and pride. Like Mathers and Crowley, Yeats believed that the time for such glorious change was rife.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹³ Gonne, *Servant of the Queen*, 172-3.

¹⁹⁴ For a full exploration of Yeats's ideas and methods see Ellmann, *Yeats: the Man and the Masks*, 118-37.

¹⁹⁵ Yeats, *Autobiographies*, 253-4.

¹⁹⁶ For his ideas on the Egyptian nature of Irish Christianity see 'Commentary on Supernatural Songs' in W.B. Yeats, *The King of the Great Clock Tower: Commentaries and Poems* (New York: Macmillan, 1935), 45-6.

¹⁹⁷ W.B. Yeats, 'Autobiography: First Draft', 251.

¹⁹⁸ See 1896 letters of William Sharp/ Fiona Macleod, in *Letters to Yeats*, I.

Ultimately, Yeats's Castle was not established. Nevertheless, Mathers was influenced by Yeats's Celtic aspirations and combined such ideas with his own about Scotland's pagan heritage and a Scotland reborn. As Mathers became more concerned with the Isis mysteries he became less attached to the Celtic mysteries, but at the same time he continually endeavoured to link ancient Mediterranean paganism to real and near places in Britain and France, thereby bringing paganism closer to home. A consideration of Yeats's mystery religion reveals that such a concern was very consciously tied to the morality and social life of the nation. This further illuminates the relationship and the distinction between mystery religions and magic. The Golden Dawn offered a system of magic but it could also function as a mystery religion; however, as Mathers and Yeats outgrew the original Order they increasingly turned their attentions to mystery religions and looked increasingly to the wider world. This correlation perhaps reveals that the increased preoccupation with mystery religions, as opposed to a system of ritual magic, contributed to his stepped up concern for the mundane world.

Therefore, paganism was creeping into the social arena, and the magical and mundane worlds were becoming increasingly united. However, one cannot stress too strongly that this use of paganism was rarely severed from its mystical and magical origins. Crowley's Abbey of Thelema, for example, was not a real plan for social action and Crowley did not see this as the method to inaugurate the new era *en masse*. Similarly, Mathers believed that social action should not come first. In 1896 the publisher Bailly was attempting to bring out a magazine entitled 'Isis' which he planned as the organ of the Celtic cause. He wrote to the Mathers asking for their support but they were opposed to his plans, arguing that before anything could be accomplished Celtic pantheons must be re-awakened by skrying and ceremony. In this context, Moina Mathers explained to Yeats that, 'anything of the mind got up without the solid basis of Truth we will not have to do with'.¹⁹⁹ Thus their emphasis was on the religious characteristic of revelation. Crowley may have hated Christianity and believed that the idea of faith was 'bankrupt', but he was highly religious in temperament. The motto of *The Equinox* highlights his position: 'the method of science - the aim of religion'. The journal similarly stated its objective as 'a realisation of true manhood and womanhood, and the attainment of

¹⁹⁹ Letter dated 16th March 1897, in *Letters to Yeats*, I. 29.

conscious immortality in the realisation of the highest state of existence is perfection'.²⁰⁰ Crowley believed that the way to arrive at truth was the way of the mystic since this enabled one 'to possess a faculty of apprehension independent of reason'.²⁰¹ Thus mystical ideas always governed teleological processes.

Furthermore, although emphasis on the social application of paganism can be used to argue that these magicians were continually reaching for power and status, this may only be partially true. Their speech and behaviour did seem to merge with their dreams, but to view this only at a social level neglects the mystical emphasis. This takes us back to the idea and practice of theurgy. Although theurgy was a method to uncover and thereby increase the powers of man, at the heart of this idea was a principle which was in direct opposition to individual status and power. As Bullock in one of the Golden Dawn's flying rolls, 'Principia of Theurgia or the Higher Magic' explained,

Theurgia is the science of communication with planetary spirits, the powers composing the Hierarchies of Being and Gods of Light...the road to Summum Bonum lies therefore through self-sacrifice of Lower to the Higher, for behind that Higher Self lies the concealed Form of the Ancient Days, the synthetical Being of Divine Humanity.²⁰²

This idea of self-sacrifice is of great importance in the use of pagan ideas and concepts of man.

Crowley has been greatly condemned throughout history. He has been described as 'the wickedest man in the world' and critics have seen him as a morally debauched megalomaniac. However, such criticism ignores his magical concepts and religious temperament. His act of worship to Pan in the desert was not an act of mere homosexual 'deviance' but a magical sacrifice, which led Crowley to feel he had ceremonially crossed the Abyss. After his experience, he wrote of his realisation that to become a Master of the Temple he had to die as far as his ordinary personality was concerned. A message from an Angel came to him saying, 'these adepts seem like pyramids...Verily is the pyramid a Temple of Initiation. Verily also is it a tomb. Thinkest thou that there is life within the Masters of the Temple? Verily, there is no life in them'. Crowley felt that 'I did not exist'

²⁰⁰ 'Preface' to *The Equinox*, Vol.1, No. 8 (September, 1912), xii.

²⁰¹ Crowley, *Confessions*, 509.

²⁰² Bullock, 'Principles of Theurgia or Higher Magic'.

and wrote of his understanding that the 'I' must undergo dissolution and dispersion.²⁰³ The Golden Dawn had taught that such awareness could not be accessed this side of death and Crowley confirmed this in his own way. In analysing the use and practice of pagan ideas within this variety of paganism, we must realise that magical and mystical tenets permeate throughout. To be attracted to the pagan ideas of this brand was to be attracted to fundamentally mystical, religious ideas.

Overall therefore, we can see that this variety of paganism used paganism in magic as a way to achieve 'true wisdom and perfect happiness'. Members of the Golden Dawn were attracted to pagan elements in magic in varying degrees so that while some remained (at least in their eyes) devout Christians, others became drunk on pagan ideas. Magic was attractive because it empowered the individual and indeed can perhaps be seen as largely only for the individual because of the personal nature in which knowledge and wisdom was revealed. However, the method of theurgy, so popular with nineteenth century magicians, was continually wrapped in mysticism and the foremost magicians of this period were all highly spiritual people. Although the social and the magical could become intertwined for some magicians, most notably Mathers and Crowley, in the first instance they believed themselves prophets of a new religion and the twentieth century on the verge of a new faith.

²⁰³ Crowley, *Confessions*, 621-4.

CONCLUSION

The three varieties of paganism, which we have discussed at length, need now to be brought together. Indeed, the varieties do not represent distinct and separate movements, but rather different aspects of the same phenomenon. In reaching conclusions about paganism during our period of study, it is necessary to consider why and how paganism matters to a historian. Posing these questions allows for a broader perspective, locating our subject fundamentally in the climate of its age and intrinsically linked to the wider cultural and intellectual milieu. Furthermore, it reveals precisely the extent to which paganism was not a stand-alone entity, instead pervading and pervaded by its cultural world of operation. This gives us important insights as to what was possible to the late Victorian and Edwardian imagination, in terms of its heights and its limits.

The question of ‘why’ is perhaps the easiest to answer: it is primarily a question of popularity and extent. Edward Carpenter wielded a significant influence in England during his lifetime, particularly outside of London. He directly influenced the thought of many important figures, such as Roger Fry, Raymond Unwin, E.M. Forster, and, as Delavenay has convincingly argued, D.H. Lawrence.¹ He influenced the theory and practice behind the progressive school, Bedales, as well as Fabian and New Life organisations.² The numerable signatures of praise by eminent men and women collected on his seventieth birthday bear witness to the extent of his appeal.³ Carpenter also wrote of the attentiveness and interest that his talks in the north of England received, a point which helped convince him that the new religion was soon to come forth.⁴ Of course, those who were attracted to Carpenter were not necessarily pagans; however, that a man whose work was so fundamentally about the rise of a new paganism could gain popularity and esteem shows that such a mind-frame was not out of tune with wider, albeit radical, sentiment or operating in a confined circle located on the remote edges of the cultural fringe. The sense in which the writers of this variety of paganism felt they were operating within a wider context is also important. Carpenter placed himself in a

¹ Delavenay, *D.H. Lawrence and Edward Carpenter*, passim.

² Chapter 3, 97.

³ See also the essays of commemoration in Beith, ed. *Edward Carpenter: In Appreciation*.

⁴ Carpenter, *Days and Dreams*, 266.

line of fellowship with his hero, Walt Whitman.⁵ As we have seen by his popularity within this variety in general, Whitman stands perhaps as its nominal figurehead, important not so much as a prophet to disciples, but for the sense of comradeship and context of working towards something bigger than his remote presence inspired. While this is not to say the individuals of this variety were working as a cohesive pagan bloc, this sense was important for raising the profile of their calls, both to its advocates and the wider society. In addition, it must be clarified that paganism was not always their governing impulse; it was often peripheral to the people we have examined. Nevertheless, this variety of paganism involved many major figures and included many different aspects of the intellectual and cultural world of the time.

Our second variety of paganism was undoubtedly the most widespread of our three. The number of poets and other artists who wrote positively about paganism and the return of Pan were innumerable. The decadents were highly vociferous, achieving a presence often higher than their actual numbers would suggest. The critics perceived paganism in literature as a widely manifest phenomenon, which had the power to threaten the moral fibre of the country. Again, while this is by no means to suggest that England played host to hundreds of pagans, the presence of such ideas was intrinsically part of cultural climate of the day. For example, G.K. Chesterton wrote that as a young man most of the men among his elders, such as Henley and Swinburne, 'produced on my mind a curious cloudy impression of being all one background of Pagan pessimism'.⁶ In France, Baudelaire articulated a similar perception, 'for some time I have had all of Olympus at my heels...impossible to take a step, to speak a word, without stumbling into something pagan'.⁷ We have examined those who pushed paganism to the foreground, but in assessing the extent of paganism in England, it is important to recognise this 'background' of paganism, from whence they sprang.

'Magical' paganism, in a wider context, was also a significant part of the cultural environment. Aside from the numbers and wide demographic of the Golden Dawn itself (as already discussed)⁸, such ideas extended outwards. Mathers and Crowley both

⁵ Chapter 3, 78-9.

⁶ Chesterton, *Autobiography*, 283.

⁷ Baudelaire, 'The Pagan School', 73-4.

⁸ Chapter 5, 185.

performed public rites, which attracted large audiences: Mathers wrote of having to move to larger quarters due to demand; Crowley was able to sell one hundred seats per night for his Rites of Eleusis performed at Caxton Hall.⁹ Occult ideas also infiltrated fiction. As we have seen, Edgar Jepson's *No. 19* told of a practising ritual magician. Though not a ritual magician himself, Jepson was familiar with the occult and his fictional magus, Woodfell, is depicted as similar to the real magicians we have studied: he is wise and studious, his rites include the use of barbarous names, and his practises are based on a recently discovered ancient MS.¹⁰ Somerset Maugham took the blurring of reality and fiction one step further in his novel, *The Magician* (1908), whose protagonist, Oliver Haddo, was based on Crowley (though obviously imbued with Maugham's literary license and spin). Furthermore, ritual magicians were often writers and poets too; Yeats, of course, is the most obvious example of this. As we have seen, the overlap between magical symbolism and art is most important in this context.¹¹ As has also been pointed out, in the case of Crowley, the poetry of writers, such as Swinburne, was often employed in magical rituals.¹²

With the recognition of a relationship between magic and literature, we have arrived at the further point, important to reiterate: our three varieties of paganism overlapped in appeal and content. To include but three further examples: William Sharp, a key figure in our 'decadent' variety, was also involved with Yeats in the revival of the Celtic mysteries and corresponded with Symonds on their similarity of metaphysical opinion;¹³ when Victor Neuberg left Crowley, physically and emotionally exhausted, he turned to Vera Pragnells's 'The Sanctuary', a rural retreat inspired by and dedicated to Carpenter;¹⁴ and escapism, although most prominent in the literature discussed in Chapter 4, is by no means confined to this variety but present throughout. The separation of our varieties has been a necessary tool for this thesis, but it should be no means detract from the perception of these varieties as different aspects of an overall rise of paganism.

⁹ Lees, 'Isis Worship in Paris'; Crowley, *Rites of Eleusis*.

¹⁰ Jepson, *No. 19*, 62; 284; 300.

¹¹ Chapter 5, 204-5.

¹² Chapter 5, 221.

¹³ See Sharp's letters to Yeats and Symonds in *Letters to Yeats* and *Letters and Papers of John Addington Symonds*.

¹⁴ Fuller, *Magical Dilemma of Victor Neuberg*, 212-13.

Therefore, having examined the popularity and extent of our varieties of paganism, as well as recognising the overlap between varieties, we can see that paganism was a significant strand of cultural thought. Paganism during our period of study has previously been overlooked by historians of the period perhaps because it did not act as a homogenous, discrete idea with uniform, or at least tangible, effect. Furthermore, paganism has been overlooked perhaps because the numbers involved were assumed to be small and its influence confined to a parlour trick. It is my contention that, by contrast, paganism is significant to our understanding of the late Victorian and Edwardian world. The extent to which paganism was appealing and was expounded varied in different degrees among individuals, but it nevertheless *did* exist and *could* exert a powerful force of attraction. This leads us to the question of ‘how’ paganism matters to the historian. Was paganism simply the positive meditation upon ancient images and ideas by men and women with the education to have such images at their disposal, it would indeed be only an intellectual game. However, as the creative use of certain aspects of the ancient world, as the manipulation of ancient images, and as a dialogue between the failings of the modern world and appeal of the old, paganism becomes something fundamentally revealing of the ideas and aspirations of certain men and women in particular, and illuminating of tendencies in the cultural and intellectual climate in general.

Let us turn then to the question of paganism as a religion. The recognition of paganism in this way is important for enhancing and deepening our understanding of the pluralism of religion during this period. In the face of rising doubt in traditional Christian faiths, religion often came to function as an intellectual pursuit. Initially science was often seen by many as the pathway to the ultimate truths of nature and the eternal. Biblical theology became less important, replaced in preference for a rational ontology. This affected paganism in terms of its shift away from the traditional location of divine knowledge and its emphasis on the method of science to extract truth. This can be seen particularly in ‘magical’ paganism, Crowley’s banner for the *Equinox*, for example, proclaiming ‘the method of science - the aim of religion’.

Scientific ideas also influenced concepts of the place of man. The rise of humanism and popularity of the humanist theory expounded by the French philosopher Auguste

Comte, are important in this context. Humanism, as propounded by one of its foremost authorities at the turn of the century, F.C.S. Schiller, was a rational, philosophical enquiry, based in scientific ethics, and pragmatism, and fundamentally giving full recognition to Protagoras's vision of truth that 'man is the measure of all things'.¹⁵ Comtism, in T.R. Wright's definition, took this further:

[It] was a systematic attempt to found a humanist religion which differed from other forms of religious humanism...in claiming to have established the three essential elements of religion, a creed, a cult, a code of conduct, on a scientific basis without resort to unverifiable supernatural hypothesis...metaphysical questions...played no part.¹⁶

While paganism during our period was similar to this in its search for an alternative faith and its emphasis on the centrality of man, it departs from it in its consideration of the metaphysical. Instead, ideas of paganism were similar to those men Turner has highlighted, such as James Ward, John Romanes, Samuel Butler, Henry Sidgwick, Alfred Russel Wallace, and Frederic Myers, who, though believing science important, asserted that it did not provide a complete guide to life and refused to abandon metaphysical ideas and idealism.¹⁷ This was the same argument employed by Carpenter in his emphasis on the limitations of modern science and his call for the need to look beyond man in the natural world.¹⁸

It is in this way that paganism in England veered away from the traditional sense of an earth-centred religion. The natural world was undoubtedly venerated: there was a rise in the belief of an Earth Mother; nature was responded to aesthetically, as good and sacred because beautiful; and there was a belief that men could learn from nature and in getting back to nature could redirect the efforts of the modern world or, at least, experience nature's remedy for a short time themselves. However, rather than this being about the empirical and the happy operation of man in his natural environment alone, their pantheism stressed the experience of nature as the pathway to the metaphysical. This

¹⁵ See F.C.S. Schiller, *Humanism. Philosophical Essays* (London: MacMillan, 1903); *Plato or Protagoras* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1908).

¹⁶ T.R. Wright, *The Religion of Humanity. The Impact of Comtean Positivism on Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3.

¹⁷ Frank M. Turner, *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

¹⁸ Chapter 3, 117.

is not to say that their ideas were used to create another world, existing as a remote 'up-there' form of heaven. Man was linked to both the material and the spiritual, able to attain the spiritual if able to unlock his latent powers by self-realisation, whether through magic, artistic genius, or perceptions achieved from correct living. Thus it was the ideas of Plato, mystic Orphic and Pythagorean sects, the Hermetic tradition, and Neo-Platonism, with their material-spirit duality, that were the most appealing. This impulse is part of the same preference apparent by the end of century in the wider intellectual climate for idealism and mysticism over rationalism and empiricism. More specifically, it is part of the overall triumph of idealism in the classics. As Turner has demonstrated, ancient Greece was no longer seen as a 'rational, critical enlightenment', but a place of 'religious and ethical idealism'.¹⁹ This preference for the extended consciousness also places paganism alongside ideas of spiritualism in circulation at this time and the investigations of the popular Society of Psychical Research, whose members included the likes of Gladstone, Tennyson, Ruskin, Bergson, Freud, and Yeats.²⁰ Therefore, this research into paganism contributes to current research which collectively throws Owen Chadwick's assertion of an overall 'secularisation of the European mind in the nineteenth century' increasingly into the shade.²¹

Furthermore, through the exploration of paganism, the limits of the late Victorian and Edwardian mind can be ever more revealed. In this it is important to recognise that a fully blown religion of paganism did not come to fruition; instead, hybrid versions were propounded. Images of paganism could never be divorced from the world in which their writers operated. Here we should remember that religious doubt and inclinations towards other forms of religion were not stances taken lightly. This could affect the confidence with which they wrote of paganism. For example, Carpenter described of Symonds, 'while sometimes he wrote with ardour as almost a propagandist of the faith, at other times he hedged and went backwards on himself as one alarmed at his own temerity'.²² In

¹⁹ Turner, *Contesting Cultural Authority*, 323-362, 359.

²⁰ Cited in Ivor Gratton Guinness, ed. *Psychical Research: A Guide to its History, Principles and Practices* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1982), 20-34.

²¹ Owen Chadwick, *The Secularisation of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

²² Lecture delivered in Caxton Hall, 13 December, 1922. Printed as Edward Carpenter, *Some Friends of Walt Whitman: A Study in Sex-Psychology* (London: British Society for the Study of Sex-Psychology, 1924). In Carpenter Collection Reel 38.

addition, the intellectual consciousness of religious debate caused many not to want to simply replace one complete religious faith with another. Instead there was a specific preference for intellectual agnosticism. Lowes Dickinson spoke of the benefits of keeping one's horizons open, asserting that the best attitude was one of a man who

while candidly recognising that he does not know, and faithfully pursuing or awaiting knowledge, and ready to accept it when it comes, yet centres meantime his emotional, and therefore his practical life about a possibility which he selects because of its value, its desirability.²³

The hybridisation of paganism should be recognised as an essential tool for our exponents of paganism. Often this took the form of the enmeshing of paganism with large portions of Christianity, as we have examined fully in Chapter 3. Such images can perhaps be neatly summed by up reference to Charles Sims's painting, 'The Wood Beyond the World' (1913), which depicts an idyllic springtime scene of naked youths dancing in a forest by a lake, complete with both the Greek three Graces and the Madonna and child. This method toned down the radical content of a call for paganism. It can be seen not only as a tactical device to help make paganism more acceptable; perhaps more importantly, it was often the crucial step necessary to enable belief by its writer. Such techniques were also employed because of the popularity of ideas of a world religion, which rendered different religions revealers of different aspects or versions of the same essential truth.²⁴ Therefore, hybridisation is a vital trait of the paganism during our period of study and fundamentally locates paganism in the context of its cultural world.

Let us next turn to examine what bearing the paganism of our period had on perceptions of the ancient world. Firstly, it can be said that the ancient world was increasingly perceived as different to the modern. This manifested itself in a shift away from fifth century Athens, or at least the fifth century Athens of the Olympians.²⁵ Margot K. Louis has examined late Victorian mythography leading to a conclusion that mystery

²³ G. Lowes Dickinson, 'Religion: A Criticism and a Forecast' in *The Independent Review* (1903); repr. in *Letters from John Chinaman*, 106-58, 107-8.

²⁴ See Chapter 5, 205.

²⁵ See, for example, Chapter 4, 148-9.

religions in particular were represented as what religion ought to be.²⁶ The present examination of paganism adds to this perception; as we have seen, ancient mystery religions were important in 'magical' paganism. However, the importance of a rising interest in mystery religions needs to be set in a wider context. By the end of the nineteenth century the ecstatic experience was valued more than ever before and man's intuition, rather than his reason, was increasingly asserted as the way to attain truth. Lowes Dickinson articulated this in his discussion of mystery religions in the *Greek View of Life*. He asserted that inspiration is a high form of madness and possessed of a truer insight than that of sanity, such that while the sane mind is of human origin, madness is of divine origin.²⁷ Such discourse on ancient mystery religions can be seen as both the product of and contribution towards a rise of a general interest in mysticism.

Indeed, one aspect of the religious experience that appears as particularly important in paganism during our period is that of mysticism. Individuals in all of our varieties had mystical experiences, most usually when out of doors. The list is innumerable, and so to recount just a few: Kenneth Grahame gave intimations of his experience in *Wind in the Willows*; Richard Jefferies's *Story of My Heart* details his experience, or as he terms it, 'soul emotion'; Arthur Machen had one particularly awe-inspiring encounter in the Welsh valley of the Usk; and Carpenter received *Towards Democracy* as a mystical revelation.²⁸ William Sharp's description of his experience while in Italy perhaps exemplifies what many felt:

Altogether I felt electrified in mind and body. The sunflood intoxicated me...I seemed to inhale it – to drink it in – to absorb it at every pore – to become it – to become the heart and soul within it. And then in the midst of it all came my old savage longing for a fragrant life: for freedom from the bondage we have involved ourselves in.²⁹

In general, they were felt to be experiences of a religious intuition of union with the world. Carpenter attempted to explain the phenomena in terms of the soul's link to the cosmic consciousness, affecting the soul to bear a dim memory of race experience, which

²⁶ Margot K. Louis, 'Gods and Mysteries: The Revival of Paganism and the Remaking of Mythography through the Nineteenth Century' in *Victorian Studies*, 48 (Spring 2005), 329-61, 354.

²⁷ Lowes Dickinson, *Greek View of Life*, 28.

²⁸ Chapter 4, 155; Chapter 3, 72-3; 117-8; Chapter 4, 174; Chapter 3, 77-8, 115.

²⁹ Sharp: *A Memoir*, 187-8.

may become wakened into illumination.³⁰ The mystical experience, perceived by ritual magicians, was the temporal fixation of the mind solely on the present, which rendered it the same as being eternal, and so marked the annihilation of time and space and union with the universe.³¹ In art, such experiences were linked to artistic genius and, for symbolists, it was the intimation of the true reality beyond the world of appearances.³² Furthermore, mystical experiences were often specifically induced using drugs and alcohol. In general, it was believed, as George Bernard Shaw summed up, that drugs produce art, while sobriety, the ‘average curate’s sermon’.³³

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a body of literature on mysticism began to amass, culminating in Evelyn Underhill’s 1911 authoritative text.³⁴ The American psychologist and philosopher, William James, asserted that personal religious experience has its root and centre in mystical states of consciousness.³⁵ Underhill went further, hoping that it would be restored ‘as the science or art of the spiritual life’.³⁶ Others were less positive; for example, Max Nordau saw it as merely a symptom of decadence, a trick played by the degenerate mind due to his abundance of uncompleted associations.³⁷ Therefore mysticism is an important strand in the cultural milieu of our period. Mysticism in the context of paganism allows us to see certain ways in which mysticism was directed and orientated, enabling us to gain a more complete understanding of the ways in which mysticism was manifest. Mysticism is significant for our understanding of paganism because it reveals the importance of individual and personal relations with the divine. It is also revealing in the context of a general reluctance to abide by a rigid, fully formed religion, and points to the kind of religious or spiritual life that was often preferred, emphasising ever more the significance of gnosis of the self and, correspondingly, of the wider universe.

³⁰ See in particular, Edward Carpenter, ‘The Gods as Embodiments of Race-Memory’ in *Hibbert Journal*, Vol. II, No. 2 (January, 1904), 259-279.

³¹ See, for example, Farr, *Mystery of Time*, 2; Crowley, *Rites of Eleusis*, 8.

³² See Arthur Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (London: 1911).

³³ George Bernard Shaw, ‘On Going to Church’ in *The Savoy*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (January, 1896), 13-27, 13.

³⁴ Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism. The Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness* (1911; repr., Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999).

³⁵ William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1903; repr. New York: Touchstone, 1997), 299.

³⁶ ‘Preface’ to Underhill, *Mysticism*, xiv.

³⁷ Cited in James, *Varieties*, 334.

The rise of interest in mysticism and the ensuing direction of interest in the ancients was also linked to a rising consciousness of the East. Perceptions of the East were relevant and apparent in the context of Victorian colonialism. Eastern mysticism infiltrated educated circles and became popular for their existence as alternative intellectual and religious ideas. The Bhagavad-Gita was widely read, so too were Buddhist theories. Hellenism and Orientalism often became intermingled; concepts of the ancients were used to inform ideas about the Orient and the experience of the East as a so-called 'primitive' society, informed perceptions of ancient society.³⁸ One important example of the way in which their images coalesced, was in the idea of both ancient paganism and the East as representing a liberated 'other'. The role of the East in this was recognised by Edward Said. He asserted that 'virtually no European writer who wrote on or travelled to the Orient in the period after 1800 exempted himself or herself from this quest...What they looked for often...was a different type of sexuality, perhaps more libertine and less guilt-ridden'.³⁹ Throughout the present examination of paganism we have seen that the ancient Mediterranean world was often used in a similar fashion: it was represented as a world of freedom and passion, in contrast to the strict and oppressive morality of Evangelicalism. In this context, it is important to point out that paganism made a significant contribution towards fostering a less restrictive attitude to sex (including homosexuality) and more generous attitude to pleasure.

In terms of perceptions of the ancient world it is important furthermore to highlight the growing recognition of the more Eastern aspects of ancient paganism. In this, attitudes towards Neo-Platonism were important. Thomas Whittaker, in his study published in 1901, asserted that the general perception of Neo-Platonism was that in its struggle with Christianity it appropriated Oriental ideas and so lost its traditional Hellenic character. However, Whittaker makes the distinction that scholarship at the turn of the century tended to make less of the Oriental character of the school and more of its real dependence on preceding Greece philosophy and religion.⁴⁰ This emphasis again contributed to the ever waning mid-Victorian emphasis on ancient Greece as sane and

³⁸ See Parminder Kaur Bakshi, 'Homosexuality and Orientalism: Edward Carpenter's Journey to the East' in *Edward Carpenter*, ed. Brown, 151-77.

³⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 190.

⁴⁰ Thomas Whittaker, *The Neo-Platonists: A Study in the History of Hellenism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901), vii-xii.

reasoned. In addition, Neo-Platonism is important for its status as a melting pot of ideas, or mature age. As we have seen, ritual magicians were highly attracted to their ideas and there was a continuity of intent between the ancient and modern. Yeats asserted that if he could spend a month in antiquity he would chose precisely this period, believing that he would find 'in some little wine-shop some philosophical worker in mosaic who could answer all my questions'.⁴¹ Whittaker argued that 'Neoplatonic thought is the 'maturest thought that the European world has seen'.⁴² However, through its links to more ancient beliefs and practices, such as those of the Egyptians, Pythagoreans and Platonists, their thoughts could also be seen as very ancient. Having reached this point, it is now necessary to turn to examine Victorian and Edwardian discourses between the old and the new and young.

As we have seen throughout the course of this thesis, an attraction to paganism was generally out of line with the general Victorian belief in progress and yet in their aspirations towards coming ages they did subscribe to such a belief. This is because the paganism they called for was what they believed to be a new and improved version than that of the old kind. The overall disposition can perhaps be summed up as one of questioning whether, in Neuberg's words in his poem to Diana, 'I am born/ 2,000 years too late to worship Thee...or may it be/ 2,000 years too soon'.⁴³ In this way, the time in which they lived could sometimes feel very early and young or very late and old. This sentiment was not confined to those who dreamed of paganism. G.K. Chesterton, often the spokesman for his age, wrote that they were living in a twilight world, such that

There are times when we felt that we are nothing but the inheritors of a humiliating splendour...but there are other times when everything seems primitive, when the ancient stars are only sparks blown from a boy's bonfire, when the whole earth seems so young and experimental that even the white hair of the old ages, in the biblical phrase, is like almond-trees that blossom, like the white hawthorn grown in May.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Yeats, *A Vision*, 279.

⁴² Whittaker, *Neo-Platonists*, 210.

⁴³ Victor Neuberg, 'The New Diana', Yorke Collection, OSN4.

⁴⁴ G.K. Chesterton, 'Defence of Nonsense' in *The Defendant* (London: J.M. Dent and Son, 1901), 61-71, 61.

While the paganism of the decadents revelled in living in a late, weary and refined age, the impulse to paganism usually placed emphasis on a younger, fresher age. The discourse on the youth of the era often extended to youth of the individual. Sharp defined paganism as the sentiment of 'les jeunes', whether in age or manner.⁴⁵ Carpenter believed in love as fundamentally youthful and so asserted that modern pagans would be youthful in character.⁴⁶ The mystical experiences of our admirers of paganism were often encountered when young.⁴⁷ Youth could be linked to the very wise; such ideas filtered from the East, with images of their wise Lamas and Sufis as men eternally youthful in appearance. Images of youth were also linked to the uneducated classes, who through their lack of learning and thinking were romantically imagined as forever dancing and jesting.⁴⁸ Concepts of youth were invariably bound up with an inherent optimism: youth was about the absence of world-weariness.

The sense of living in an age '2,000 years too soon' was wrapped up in ideas of a coming great era with an emphasis on change and the new. As we have seen, the feeling of living in an age of transition was a key Victorian experience. As Frederic Harrison expressed, 'we all felt a-tip-toe with hope and confidence. We *are* on the threshold of a great time, even if our time is not great itself...we all know what great things are in the air'.⁴⁹ Those attracted to paganism often aligned themselves with and incorporated new, usually radical, ideas. Indeed, specifically disenchanted with the modern world, they were often acutely sensitive to new ideas. The most notable example of this is Carpenter, whose vision brought him into the orbit of vegetarianism, vivisection, dress reform, industrial reform, women's rights and gay rights.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, in paganism, the object was never the reform or new idea in itself; the new and change was always perceived as having an end. This was articulated in 'responsible' and 'magical' paganism, but less obvious in the paganism of literature, which tended to be the rapturous expression of the future era rather than the setting out of its teleology. In 'responsible' and 'magical' paganism, Hegelian ideas of thesis plus antithesis equalling synthesis were employed: for

⁴⁵ 'Foreword' to *Pagan Review*.

⁴⁶ Chapter 3, 111.

⁴⁷ For example, Symonds declared that he had regular trances until the age of twenty-eight. Brown, ed. *Biography*, I. 29-31.

⁴⁸ See A.E. Housman, *A Shropshire Lad* (London: Keegan Paul, Trench, Truber, 1896).

⁴⁹ Harrison, 'A Few Words', 415.

⁵⁰ Chapter 3, 85-91.

Carpenter, these were the three stages of consciousness; for Crowley this was the aeons of the Mother, the Father and the Child.⁵¹ Invariably first came paganism, then Christianity, and finally, to come, a new form of paganism.

Important in these ideas were not the passive evolutions of remote forces of the earth, but instead the role and place of man himself. The message of Socrates in his proclamation of the old Delphic phrase 'know thyself' came to take on new understanding. The rise to prominence of Platonic idealism led to an emphasis on the priority of emotion over the discursive. This was the same philosophical tradition that in modern times had culminated in Henri Bergson. Bergson argued that the theory of knowledge and the theory of life are inseparable. He asserted that through the intellect man can see other forms of consciousness:

Therein reside certain powers that are complementary to the understanding, powers of which we have only an indistinct feeling when we remain shut up in ourselves, but which will become clear and distinct when they perceive themselves at work, so to speak, in the evolution of nature.⁵²

We have already noted the similarity of Carpenter's *Art of Creation* to Bergson's *L'Evolution Creatrice*.⁵³ However, these ideas are also similar to ideas of artistic genius, intuitions of truth gained by men the reflection of which is expressed in their art. This is all importantly linked to the turn of the century explosion of interest in psychology. Such ideas were highly significant in all of our varieties of paganism. Ideas of psychology were of immense importance in ritual magic. In his definition of magic, Israel Regardie placed psychology at its heart and asserted that 'not until the mind and the emotional system have been cleansed and unified by the cathartic process of Psycho-therapy, can the full spiritual benefits of magical work be reflected into the mind of man'.⁵⁴ We can perhaps agree with Crowley that Freud was only really articulating the relation between the conscious and unconscious that magicians had known for centuries.⁵⁵ Thus the idea of self-realisation, which is at the root of the modern attitude, is also highly prominent in

⁵¹ Chapter 3, 79-80; Chapter 5, 222-3.

⁵² Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Miller (London: MacMillan, 1911), xiii.

⁵³ Chapter 3, 82-3.

⁵⁴ Israel Regardie, *The Middle Pillar* (Chicago: Aries Press, 1938), 13, 154.

⁵⁵ Crowley, cited in Owen, 'The Sorcerer and His Apprentice', 122.

paganism. Paganism gave man the central position; it was the understanding of his psychology and the insights gleaned by his intuition that would give rise to a new man and inaugurate a new era.

This can be seen in a continuum with Victorian ideas of the greatness of man, arising from his conquering of science, technology and nations. We have seen in 'decadent' and 'magical' paganism that this could manifest itself in a preference for aristocracy; however, it has also been noted that in theory such greatness was open to all men and emphasis was on an aristocracy of intelligence.⁵⁶ The men and women we have examined were all those of learning, if not of letters too. Nevertheless, by emphasis on individual psychology and its links to mysticism, such learning was used to enable them to traverse the heights of man and divinity. In 1901, the Canadian psychiatrist, Richard Maurice Bucke, published a notable book entitled, *Cosmic Consciousness*. Therein he reiterated Carpenter's three stages of consciousness and pointed to other individuals who, like Carpenter, had had intuitions of the cosmic conscience. Significantly, alongside Carpenter, he discussed, among others, Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, and Socrates.⁵⁷ That a living man from Sheffield could be placed on a par with the Christian saviour is in itself notable. So too is his use of the popular idea of combining different world religions into a cohesive revelation. However, it is in his conclusion that he reveals the heights of the imagination and sentiment of the time. Bucke describes these men as the beginning of

another race, walking another earth and breathing another air of which we know little or nothing, but which is, all the same, our spiritual life, as its absence would be our spiritual death. This new race is in the act of being born from us, and in the near future it will occupy and possess the earth.⁵⁸

Thus more than being great men, these individuals are members of a new species. The application of such ideas in the paganism of the period reveals the way in which paganism was used to cater both for their religious and human aspirations.

⁵⁶ Chapter 4, 177; Chapter 5, 225-6.

⁵⁷ Richard Maurice Bucke, ed. *Cosmic Consciousness. A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind* (1901; repr., Philadelphia: Innes and Son, 1905).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 318.

Turner has asserted that it is an artefact of twentieth century scholarship to separate the Victorian period into religious and secular spheres.⁵⁹ The study of paganism reveals the full value of the perils of such an approach and contributes to an understanding of the complexities of ideas in operation about spirituality and man. During our period of study, paganism was used as a way catering for both spheres. It avoided the exhortation of religion of dogma and constrained beliefs in preference for a mystical spirituality with an emphasis on man and his individual being. While 'responsible' and 'magical' paganism, in their different ways, actively sought to intellectually define what it was they were doing, giving their ideas a teleology and philosophical rationale, the paganism of decadent and escapist literature was the rapturous expression of similar final goals. All varieties of paganism were fundamentally a product of their cultural and intellectual world; the ancients served as inspiration, but they dreamed of a thoroughly modern version of paganism, imbued with the concerns and hopes of their day. Paganism was not operating at this time as a fully formed faith, nor too was it popular in mainstream circles, but it is untenable to make the resulting assumption that its presence is undeserving of scholarly attention. The cultural history of this period, the history of perceptions of the ancient world, and the history of the rise of modern pagan religions, all benefit from this examination of paganism. They stand to gain furthermore by additional research: for example, on paganism at this time in France, Germany and the United States, and on the paganism in England immediately following this period. Such examination is well beyond the scope of this thesis, but worth citing to illustrate the wider context of the current work and reveal the extent of material ripe for research.

⁵⁹ Turner, *Contesting Cultural Authority*, 26.

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